

Understanding student motivations and choice criteria to enrol in a French German double degree programme

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Abstract

Understanding student motivations and choice criteria to enrol in a French German double degree programme

This thesis explores the choice process behind the decision to enrol in a French German double degree programme. The context of the research is a collaborative programme in international management, accredited by the French German University (FGU) and delivered by a French business school (ESCE Paris) and a German University of Applied Sciences (HWR Berlin), including a two-year mobility period in the partner country. The purpose of the study was to understand the deep motivations, choice criteria and potential influences which push students to enrol, as well as identify potential differences in student motivations depending on their institution of origin. Besides, the research aimed at making recommendations to better address student expectations in the delivery of French German programmes and design more effective recruitment practices.

The study design was qualitative and data were collected through 14 individual interviews carried out with ESCE and HWR registered students. A thematic analysis was conducted and the data were interpreted using a revised model of the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) as a theoretical framework.

The research demonstrates that the choice of the French German Programme (FGP) prevails over the choice of the institutions offering it and has its own set of determinants. The decision to enrol is based on a mix of intrinsic and extrinsic motivational factors, where social capital, cultural capital and prior experiences play a critical role, even if students also consider more rational elements such as short-term benefits of the programme or longer-term career expectations in their choice. The study highlights the strong parental influence, the role of early academic decisions and the impact of country and city image in student orientation towards international study path. The findings suggest that applicants share a

number of beliefs and values with respects to international academic programmes, as well as a high self-concept of ability, enhanced reflexivity skills and the strategic ability to adapt to different learning environments. The study suggests that the choice of the FGP can be seen as a strategy of differentiation where students expect to accumulate multiple forms of cultural and social capital in order to obtain competitive positioning in job markets. No major differences were found between ESCE and HWR registered students, except for their attitude towards tuition fees and costs associated with the programme. The research also demonstrates the influence of the institutional context, the higher education system and the larger legal, social and economic environment on the choice of a study path, in line with the four-layer model of college choice developed by Perna (2006). The study concludes by calling for additional research in that field and for the replication of similar research on other French German programmes to check the generalizability of the findings.

Key words: cross-border collaborative academic programmes, enrolment decision process, enrolment motivations, international double degrees, French German programmes, Theory of Planned Behaviour.

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1 Introduction

The internationalisation of higher education has pushed institutions to adapt the content and delivery mode of their programmes to the new academic landscape. Student mobility programmes have developed worldwide to expose students to a more international environment and likewise, some institutions have made the strategic choice to jointly develop and deliver cross-border academic programmes. The French German Programme (FGP) between ESCE Paris and HWR Berlin provides a good illustration of this trend as both institutions have collaborated in the design of the programme and taken the necessary steps to get it accredited by the French German University (FGU). At that time, no prior market research was carried out and the initiative was mainly due to individuals from both schools who were convinced of the need for this innovative study path. The programme was finally launched in 2002 in Paris and Berlin simultaneously and has been running ever since with a limited intake every year. Recent cohorts have seen a slight drop in the number of applications on the French side, whereas they remained stable on the German side, leading academic leaders to reflect on the future of the programme. At the same time, the FGU, an organisation supported and funded by French and German authorities, has adopted an ambitious agenda with the aim to double the number of French German students by 2020. Understanding student motivations and choice criteria will provide valuable information to course leaders for the positioning of the programme, will enable them to better grasp the profile of potential applicants and to improve the marketing of the programme. The findings may also provide insight for policy makers interested in developing cross-border academic collaborations between France and Germany.

1.1 Presentation of the French German University (FGU)

As a result of a joint initiative of the French and German governments, the FGU was created in 1997 (Weimar Agreement, 1997) with the mission to strengthen the cooperation in higher education and research between the two countries, to increase student mobility, to promote and support the setting-up of educational programmes leading to the award of two official degrees, and to provide graduates with bicultural competences on top of their professional expertise (French German University, 1997). The purpose of the FGU was three-fold: by

fostering the setting-up of double degrees between French and German Higher Education Institutions, it was anticipated that graduates from French German programmes would develop a sense of supranationality and in the long run, strengthen the French German friendship. At the same time, another goal was to equip students with the necessary global and cross-cultural attributes required by the French and German job markets in order to strengthen economic links and reaffirm of the French German couple as a central element of the European Union. Finally, the decision made by the French and German governments also reflected their awareness of the key strategic role played by higher education in today's global competition and the foundation of the FGU was an endeavour to foster the internationalisation of national HEIs by promoting international collaborative academic paths.

After 17 years of operation, more than 150 educational programmes have been accredited and are sponsored by the FGU and more than 5500 students are enrolled in bilateral collaborations between French and German higher education institutions.

This development illustrates a more global trend towards international student mobility and the development of transnational higher education (TNHE). The last ten years have seen a dramatic increase in student mobility numbers worldwide and in the setting-up of international collaborative programmes overseas. One of the drivers of this trend was originally the focus on international student recruitment for the economic benefit of the receiving institution via tuition fees and it evolved towards a model of national influence (Caruana, 2016), notably thanks to the setting-up of numerous franchised academic programmes, as UK, Australia or United States have developed overseas. France and Germany also benefited from the growth of student mobility as they ranked in 2014 as the third and fifth countries in terms of international student reception with respectively 235,000 and 210,000 students, far behind the United States (842,000 students) and the UK (428,000 students) (UNESCO Institute of Statistics, 2014, as cited in France Stratégie, 2016). However, language limitations and regulatory issues have so far limited the development of franchised academic programmes for French and German institutions, in spite of recent initiatives in French-speaking African countries for French institutions. According to a report on French transnational higher education (France Stratégie, 2016), only 31,151 students were following a French higher education programme abroad in 2014, and 23,388 were

registered in German programmes abroad, compared to over 95,000 students for the UK. The gap was even broader concerning the provision of distance learning with 109,000 students registered with UK institutions, and only 5,668 with French institutions (data not available for Germany). The report argues that a lack of clearly formulated strategy together with institutional and legal constraints concerning the regulatory provisions for the award of degrees overseas may explain the weakness of French institutions in the provision of French programmes abroad. This may also explain a certain preference for more traditional cooperation schemes such as joint or double degrees.

If considered as TNHE, international double degree programmes only represent a small portion of transnational education and are usually designed for rather limited student intakes. The model of double degree promoted by the FGU is that of a collaborative partnership between institutions of equal status where none of the partner institutions is trying to impose its view in terms of academic regulation, quality assurance or teaching approach. It is based on a joint management of the collaborative programme and on mutual trust and respect between HEIs. In spite of their small relative weight in TNHE, research shows that international double degrees are developing worldwide and changing the international educational landscape. Originally, they developed in Europe as a consequence of the Bologna process, which created a European higher education system (Knight, 2008; Obst & Kuder, 2009). But today, double degrees develop in other areas of the globe (Gacel-Aviva, 2009; Kong, 2008; Labi, 2009; Labi, 2011; Obst & Kuder, 2009, 2011; Kuder, Lemmens & Obst, 2014), which tends to suggest that they have become an instrument towards more internationalisation: in a sense, they are both a consequence and a driver of internationalisation (Maierhofer & Kriebnegg, 2009; Marginson & Sawir, 2005).

The case of the FGU however is specific as it is the first (unique) example of a publicly-funded organisation officially created in order to promote double degree programmes and cross-border education between two countries. Most of the double degrees developed worldwide have been initiated by higher education institutions with the aim to strengthen their international portfolio, enhance their international profile or offer students rich and well-articulated international academic experiences. In the case of the FGU, the initiative comes from policy makers from both countries, who have taken the lead and created a platform to push higher education institutions from both sides of the border to establish

double degree agreements. After years of operation, the balance seems positive, and in year 2010, the French and German governments stated their intention to keep expanding the number of French German accredited programmes in order to double the number of participating students by year 2020 (French German Agenda, 2010).

In order to achieve this ambitious objective, the FGU (which does not run directly any academic programme nor activity) will not only require the support of higher education institutions from both countries, which are the only ones entitled to set up collaborative programmes leading to two official degrees, but will also need to raise the interest of students for this type of study programmes. In a strongly competitive European higher educational landscape, characterised by a huge diversity of academic programmes, easy student mobility and almost automatic recognition of academic credentials between national academic authorities, it thus becomes necessary to better understand the factors which influence students to choose a French German programme, rather than any other academic study path.

1.2 Collaborative programme between ESCE (Paris) and HWR (Berlin)

In year 2002, ESCE – Ecole Supérieure du Commerce Extérieur (Paris) and HWR - Hochschule für Wirtschaft und Recht (Berlin) launched a French German double degree programme in international business under the auspices of the FGU. Originally positioned at Bachelor level, the programme evolved over the years and now enables participating students to obtain two official Master degrees from both institutions. Each institution is responsible for recruiting their own students for the programme, even if a representative of the partner institution sits on the admission panel. Every cohort represents a group of approximately 25 students, half of them recruited by the French institution and half of them by the German university. The programme has run successfully for more than 10 years and more than 150 students graduated from the double degree programme.

The programme is delivered between Paris and Berlin and students spend half of their studies on each site. The first year is spent at the home institution, the second at ESCE Paris, the third year is composed of a six-month internship in the partner country and a semester

of studies at HWR Berlin, the fourth year is delivered in Berlin and the final year is composed of a semester in Paris and the dissertation which can be done in either site. The programme thus requires students to frequently move from one country to the other and the first expatriation period happens in the second year for HWR students who move to Paris, while ESCE students start their expatriation period in the third year when they move to Germany.

The programme is designed for a cohort of 26 students and each institution is responsible for the recruitment of 13 students per year. After reviewing all applications, the best candidates are invited to participate in an interview to check the different selection criteria, language skills and assess the personality of the applicant. At the end of the process, 13 students are admitted on the programme with a short waiting list in case of cancellations. For regulatory reasons, ESCE can only recruit students who have passed the main school entrance examination. This examination is composed of two phases: first, a set of written exams, and then, an oral interview for those who have successfully passed the written exams. To select students for the FGP, ESCE can only accept applicants who have already been admitted to the institutional entrance examination. Thus, there is a second selection procedure organised with first year students who can apply for the FGP at the end of their first semester of studies. This clarification is necessary to understand some of the comments made by students.

1.3 Rationale for the research and research gap

ESCE has recently experienced a drop in the number of French applicants, thus creating some concern for the future of the programme and its development. At the institutional level, this phenomenon suggests a certain lack of interest of French students for this collaborative double degree programme between ESCE and HWR, especially in comparison with their German counterparts who do not seem to show similar trend.

Choosing an academic career is a complex and iterative process involving different phases, such as the choice of the study field, the choice of the programme and the choice of the institution delivering the programme. In the case of French German programmes, the choice is even more complex as applicants also integrate the cross-border nature of the educational

programme in their decision process. Biggin (2000, as cited in Briggs, 2006) indicates that students have become better informed about higher education options and more mobile, as a result, higher education institutions in general need to implement more focused marketing strategies.

Research has been carried out to investigate the process of college choice and find out the factors used by students and parents to compare the quality of HE institutions (Yugo & Reeve, 2007). Using the metaphor of students as consumers (Tavares & Cardoso, 2013), researchers suggest that in a highly competitive higher education environment, there is a need for additional market research in the area of consumer behaviour and student motivations (Gatfield & Chen, 2006; Johnson & Deem, 2003) in order to enhance the efficiency of university recruitment practices. According to Southerland (2006), “practitioners and theorists continue to rely upon models of college student behaviours that are twenty, thirty or even fifty years old. As students evolve ever more rapidly, the accuracy and utility of these models erode at an ever-increasing pace. The time has come for new ways of modelling college student choice and persistence behaviour” (p.2). Briggs (2006) also argues that most of the models of educational choices usually represent one-off initiatives, focusing on past information and difficult to replicate. This affects the reliability of the models and claims for more programme specific research in order to find out the predictors of educational choices. This calls for more practitioner research on the decision making processes and the choice of a study path.

Similarly, some research has been done to understand the choice of study abroad programmes by students (Salisbury et al, 2009; Presley et al., 2010) and to understand the factors that push students towards cross-border education, for instance between Canada and the United States (McCarthy et al., 2012). However, McCarthy et al. suggest that more “research on student mobility trends between two nations in other parts of the world would greatly add to the literature on globalization of higher education” (2012, p. 454). Similarly, Salisbury et al. (2009) also agree that too little research has been undertaken to understand the choice of study abroad programmes. They insist on the complexity of variables to consider (financial, human, cultural, social) and the relative “paucity of research” in this field (p.121)

Most of the research on student choices has adopted a quantitative approach based on large samples of students. In Germany, Obermeit (2012) regrets that the most recent research on college choice are purely statistical and not supported by theoretical frameworks. According to her, the only known qualitative study on the decision process of German students was done by Hermann and Winter (2009, as cited in Obermeit, 2012). There is an underlying assumption that educational choice models may be affected by cultural aspects and differ depending on the national context. Obermeit (2012) supports the idea of more qualitative approaches to fill the gap in German student recruitment research literature. In the same line, Perna (2006) realises that a large majority of studies on student choices have resorted to quantitative analysis but that more recently, researchers are also paying attention to specific groups in order to understand the specificities of their educational choice process. Typically, research would focus on a particular groups (Hispanics, Afro-Americans, etc.) in order to understand how to improve access to higher education. This emphasises the intuition that different social groups may have specific choice behaviours. In that respect, studying the motivations and choice criteria to enrol in a FGP should be of particular interest to understand the complexity of a choice process for a programme mainly designed for French and German nationals, delivered in two countries, in three languages, and leading to two official qualifications. Understanding the profile of students who apply for French German programmes and determining the factors which push them to apply would be beneficial to the institutions running the programme in their marketing approach. At the same time, identifying potential barriers would also help to better design cross-border programmes to suit student expectations. This would help institutions to promote their programmes more efficiently and policy makers to identify the potential adjustments which may have to be made in order to increase their overall number of students registered on French German programmes.

1.4 Proposed Research Aim

The originality of my research lies in analysing the process by which students decide to apply for a FGP, an academic programme structured between two institutions located in two influential countries within the European Union. Notably, the research will aim at

understanding the deep motivations of students for choosing this specific study programme, discovering similarities or differences between students according to their institution of origin, identifying family influences or external factors impacting the decision and isolating potential barriers to registration.

The research also aims at formulating recommendations to ESCE, HWR, and potentially other higher education institutions interested in developing French German programmes, so that they may adapt their programme offer to the expectations of applicants and be more efficient in their recruitment policies. In the same way, the outcome of this research will provide the FGU with valuable information concerning the expectations of students before registering for this type of programmes, and will help the FGU to adapt its own strategic positioning in order to suit the needs of a larger student population.

1.5 Research questions

- What motivates French and German students to apply for a French German programme?
Are the motivation factors similar between the two student groups?
- Is there a particular profile of French students applying for French German programmes?
Similarly, is there a particular profile of German students?
- What role does the family or influential others play in the decision to apply for a French German programme? Are there certain social groups that are more likely to be attracted by this type of programmes?
- What are the barriers which prevent students from applying for a French German programme?
- What recommendations can be made to ESCE and HWR regarding their collaborative programme? What implications are there for the FGU regarding its enrolment growth objective?

1.6 Place of the researcher in the study

My experience in higher education institutions has always been related to managerial positions in an international environment. When I joined ESCE in year 2000, I was appointed as Director of International Relations in charge of the internationalisation strategy of the school and one of my first missions was to set up a FGP in collaboration with our main partner institution in Berlin. This project gave me the opportunity to manage the academic aspects of an international collaboration and to discover the complexity of developing a joint curriculum. It also introduced me to the academic community and convinced me of the necessity of collaboration between academics and managers. The FGP developed even if no prior market survey had been carried out to assess student demand for this type of study path. In 2011, I was appointed Deputy CEO and no longer had a direct connection with the FGP. However, after more than 10 years of operation, it was time for ESCE and HWR to evaluate their collaboration and explore new possible developments with regards to the FGP. This gave me the opportunity to undertake practitioner research in my own professional setting and pushed me to investigate student motivations for the programme with a view to better connect student aspirations with our academic offer.

1.7 Overview of the thesis

The next chapter will provide an overview of the research literature with regards to motivation theories, models of college choice, study abroad choices and the notion of double degree programmes. Chapter 3 will present the methodology chosen for the research and introduce the theoretical framework used for the data analysis. Chapter 4 will focus on the main themes identified in the analytical phase and provide an overview of the research findings. Chapter 5 will discuss the findings in relation to prior research and offer an interpretation of the phenomenon under investigation. Chapter 6 will summarise the knowledge generated by the research and concentrate on implications for institutional staff and policy makers, before addressing the limitations of the research and suggesting avenues for further investigation.

2 Literature review

2.1 Introduction

In order to set the context for this research, the literature review will provide a definition of international double degree programmes and then will clarify the rationale behind this international trend. Then, it focuses on motivation theories and their evolution over the last century. Thirdly, a review of the literature on college choice or the choice of a study path is presented and finishes with identification of the gap in knowledge related to this topic area.

2.2 International double degrees

The present research requires some clarification of the concept of international double degree. The scientific literature related to this type of study path mainly focuses on the definition(s) of the concept itself, or on the main reasons which may push higher education institutions to develop international double degree programmes with other institutions from other parts of the world. In addition to this institutional approach, a few researchers have tried to investigate the impact of double degree programmes on students in terms of outcomes or added value but with limited success, mostly due to sample limitations and logistical difficulties in the design of the research (Culver et al., 2011; Holstein, 2012). To my knowledge, very few projects (if any) have researched the reasons why students would choose a double degree programme and student demand for international collaborative programmes is insufficiently researched (Kuder, Lemmens & Obst, 2014). Most of the literature focuses on the benefits of international mobility programmes rather than exploring specifically the outcome of international double degree programmes. However, in spite of this relatively small amount of dedicated research, the number of double degrees has increased steadily over the last 15 years, as shown by the mapping of international joint and dual degrees published by the American Council on Education (2014) or the evaluation of collaborative programmes between UK and Russia carried out by SQW Consulting (2010). International double degrees have thus become an important international trend in today's higher education landscape and this research aims at building upon the existing knowledge

in order to analyse the perception that students have towards this category of mobility programmes.

2.2.1 Origins of double degree programmes

According to Obst and Kuder (2009), in order to understand the emergence of international double degree programmes, it is necessary to go back to the Bologna Declaration (Declaration B., 1999) and understand the overall objective of this European initiative. The Declaration was a unique political step agreed between European countries in order to set the ground for a common European Academic Area. The main ambition of the declaration was to establish a common framework for academic recognition through the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS), in order to enable comparisons between national academic systems. This decision in turn made it easier for higher education institutions to engage in international collaborations with European counterparts; it facilitated the development of student mobility across Europe with easy recognition of study abroad periods; it promoted a convergence of quality assurance procedures between different national systems, it created the obligation to recognise academic qualifications within the European Union in order to create a single European job market and avoid barriers to the mobility of graduates. The declaration set 2010 as the deadline for the establishment of a true European Higher Education Area.

By enabling easier comparison between programmes, the internationalisation of higher education pushed institutions to develop strategies to become more international, in their academic contents, in their staff, and in the international opportunities for their students. Many have developed partnerships with their European counterparts in order to offer mobility programmes, ranging from the largely offered Erasmus exchange programme to the more demanding double degree programme (Asgary & Robbert, 2010).

France and Germany have gone further by creating an official body, the FGU, with the aim to support the development of joint and double degrees between French and German institutions. This particular organisation was created by the Weimar agreement (1997)

signed between the French and German governments, which sets the legal status of this international higher education institution and defines its organisation and missions. The FGU was established with an economic and political agenda and it incentivises higher education institutions to set up collaborative degrees between the two countries.

Today, international double degrees have become an international trend not only in Europe (Crosier, Purser & Smidt, 2007) but also in the rest of the world. Recent surveys show that this European phenomenon has now reached the other side of the Atlantic (Obst & Kuder, 2009, 2011), Latin America (Gacel-Avila, 2009), and Asia (Kong, 2008). Interestingly, the latest ACE survey (2014) reports that nearly half of US higher education participating in the survey mention international collaborative degrees in their strategic planning, thus confirming that the trend has now become a worldwide reality (Kuder, Lemmens & Obst, 2014; Knight & Lee, 2012), sometimes even fostered and sponsored by official organisations such as the European Commission (2014; 2015).

2.2.2 Definitions

It is important to investigate how international double degree programmes are defined. One of the most prolific writers on the internationalisation of higher education is Jane Knight, who perceived and analysed in 2005 the trend towards cross-border education and at the same time highlighted a number of challenges in relation to these study path (Knight, 2005; Knight, 2008). Logically, she also carried out research on international double degree programmes from a variety of perspectives (Knight, 2011; Knight & Lee, 2012) and for that purpose, provided the following definition of a double degree programme:

“A double degree programme awards two individual qualifications at equivalent levels upon completion of the collaborative programme requirements established by the two partner institutions” (Knight, 2011, p. 301)

The definition describes the main features of a double degree programme: a study programme developed in collaboration between two higher education institutions and leading to the award of two separate qualifications of similar level. An earlier attempt to define international collaborative programmes was made by Michael and Balraj (2003) who

analysed different models of joint degree programmes and noted that due to their diversity, these study paths could only be defined by their own features, including the length of the programme, the organisation of the mobility, the level of the degree awarded or the language of instruction. Similarly, Matross Helms (2015) recognises that international collaborative degree programmes are similar in nature but also stresses that “no two are exactly alike” (p. 6).

While attempting to offer a broad definition of the concept, Knight also highlights the confusions caused by the lack of official definition and the huge diversity of terms used to describe the same concepts, such as dual degrees, joint degrees, and consecutive degrees. Besides, she recognises that there is a wide range of possible models of international collaborative programmes (Knight & Lee, 2012), which her early definition may not apply to: for instance, a consecutive double degree will not lead to the award of two degrees of equivalent level but to the award of a first cycle degree, followed by a second cycle degree. However, for this study, I have adopted the definition provided by Knight (2011) which reflects the nature of the collaborative programme between ESCE and HWR.

2.2.3 Forms of double degrees and rationale

The difficulty in providing a widely shared definition of double degrees lies in the diversity of models which can be found in the higher education landscape. Institutions will look for the model which best suits their interests and enables them to achieve their objective, whether academic, student-centred, institutional, or strategic. Different papers explore the large diversity of programmes and provide examples of rationale for establishing double degree programmes (Kuder, Lemmens & Obst, 2014; Michael & Balraj, 2003; Knight, 2011; Asgary & Robbert, 2010; Labi, 2009).

The motivations to set up double degrees can be split in two main categories: the institutional approach and the student approach. At the institutional level, many HEIs have considered double degrees to be an ideal way to foster internationalisation among their own staff, faculties and programmes. Double degrees generally require collaboration from both

institutions at all levels of the academic chain, from admissions to degree completion. The complex academic preparatory work and the equally complex monitoring process of the double degree programme can only be achieved by committing different categories of staff to the institutional project, thus building international awareness and more openness to external influences. Some institutions may also be using double degree programmes to improve their reputation. By associating with peers of similar or better status, HEIs benefit from the positioning of the partner institutions in its own market and raises its institutional profile. Other HEIs may be using double degrees to push the internationalisation of their curriculum (Webb, 2005), offer a stronger international perspective to their students or to enlarge their course offerings and provide access for their own students to study programmes only available at partner institutions.

Another institutional motivation could be international student recruitment: this is especially true for consecutive double degrees where participants obtain a first degree from one institution before transferring to another institution, in order to obtain a second degree of higher level and better reputation.

The student approach focuses on the supposed benefits of double degree programmes for participants and very much relates to the added value of overseas studies. Research exists that tends to corroborate the direct link between international mobility programmes and the acquisition of specific skills, so called intercultural competencies (Deardoff & Jones, 2012), and employability (Crossman & Clarke, 2010). International mobility programmes are seen as a means to develop transferable skills among students and to increase their employability (Jones, 2013). In an increasingly competitive job market, intercultural experiences are considered as critical to equip students with the key skills expected by employers (Jones, 2013). Besides simple mobility programmes, double degrees are also seen as a way to differentiate from the rest of a student cohort and achieve positional competition (Tomlinson, 2007).

Introducing the notion of international double degrees and explaining the rationale behind this trend help to illuminate the specificities of the French German Programme (FGP). The international dimension of the programme and its differences compared with national study

paths may impact students' motivation to apply. Any behaviour can be motivated by a number of elements and this research aims at discovering the specific factors which create motivation for this particular programme. Thus, it is necessary to review the main motivation theories in order to understand the process behind motivation and to identify the related theoretical concepts.

2.3 Student motivations

2.3.1 Introduction to theories of motivation

The field of motivation has generated a vast amount of research in social sciences, mainly because the topic is by nature transversal and has applications in many different areas such as psychology, biology, management, or educational sciences. One could say that the diversity of potential application domains has brought about a diversity of theoretical approaches, which have in turn led to the juxtaposition of many different motivational theories, usually addressing one main area of investigation. For instance, Herzberg's two-factor theory was mainly aimed at understanding and facilitating job motivation in professional settings (Herzberg, 1964; 1966; 1974). Similarly, Deci and Ryan's findings on intrinsic motivation were essentially aiming at providing tools for educational researchers (Deci & Ryan, 1985) even if some of their concepts were applicable to other areas of knowledge. In recent years, some researchers have called for a better integration of motivation theories across disciplines and attempted to provide a broader perspective by identifying the major commonalities in the "superabundance of motivational theories" (Steel & König, 2006, p.889). However, even if many agree that decision-making and motivation require some more comprehensive and integrated approach (Cooksey, 2001; Mellers, Schwartz & Cooke, 1998), the latest theoretical refinements are essentially developments from earlier theories which they have not yet supplanted.

Motivational theories have attempted to provide a definition of the concept of motivation itself. Here again, many formulations coexist: Yorks defines motivation as "those forces within an individual that push or propel him to satisfy basic needs or wants" (1976, p.21).

Dessler considers that motivation comes from the tension caused by one or several unsatisfied important needs (1986), very much in accordance with Maslow's (1954) principle that only unsatisfied needs will generate motivation. Graham and Weiner offer a much more general definition by simply stating that "motivation is the study of why people think and behave as they do" (1996, p63), just as Guay et al. who refer to motivation as "the reasons underlying behaviour" (2010, p. 712). Another definition given by Vroom (1964) also fits into the current research as it introduces the notion of choice between possible behaviours and suggests that motivation is a process by which individuals make choices among alternative forms of activities.

Given the complexity of the field and the number of different approaches, I will focus on the theories and the main motivational concepts which I see as better suited for the purpose of this investigation: the decision-making process of a student applying for a higher education programme is usually a one-off decision which has little in common with repetitive behaviours and my aim is to understand the motivations that push a student to apply and enrol. Studying why a registered student will persist or not in his/her choice of programme is not the main concern of this research and this is why I will discard theories with strong temporal components such as the Temporal Motivation Theory (Steel & König, 2006). In the same line, the theories concerning job satisfaction, like Herzberg's motivation hygiene theory (1964) will not be presented, even if some of their concepts may be used in the analytical part.

2.3.2 The notion of need in motivation theories

Before the emergence of Hull's drive theory (1943), motivation research was mainly centred on animal investigation and on the study of instinctive reactions to stimuli (Skinner, 1935; Graham & Weiner, 1996). Hull was among the first to replace the concept of instinct by the notion of drive to explain human behaviour and to suggest that it was "a psychological deficit, or a need, and not an instinct, that instigated the organism to undertake behaviour" (Hull, as cited in Graham & Weiner, 1996, p. 67). According to Hull, a disequilibrium caused by an unsatisfied need would produce a drive to act in order to return to a state of equilibrium. The behaviour would then be determined by the drive to act (conceived as a

source of energy) and by the habit which would provide the direction of the behaviour, in line with previous stimulus-response connections.

Maslow first mentioned the hierarchy of needs in a review of psychology in 1943 (Maslow, 1943), thus confirming Hull's view that the behaviour is motivated by unsatisfied needs. But his theory extended in offering a classification of human needs (Maslow, 1954), where "basic human needs are organised into a hierarchy of prepotency" (p.375). Individuals would act in order to satisfy first lower-end needs, such as physiological needs, before turning to other needs like safety needs, love needs (including the need for affection and belongingness), esteem needs (desire for freedom, strength, achievement, or prestige), and eventually at the higher end of the spectrum, the need for self-actualisation or self-fulfilment. According to Maslow, even if "most behaviour is multi-motivated" (p. 390), generally an individual will try to satisfy a higher-level need only when the more basic needs have been at least mostly covered.

Still focusing on the definition of human needs, Alderfer offered an alternative classification with his ERG Theory (1969). In Alderfer's own words, "ERG Theory was an outgrowth of, and ultimately an alternative to Maslow's theory of human motivation" (1972, p. 357). Indeed, there are convergences and divergences between the two theories. Alderfer reduces Maslow's five categories of needs into three, *existence, relatedness and growth*, categories distinguished according to their level of concreteness. As Alderfer reckons, existence needs are consistent with Maslow's physiological needs, and growth needs are equivalent to self-actualisation needs. However, there is discrepancy in the middle category of needs as relatedness does not cover the same concept as Maslow's middle needs. In Alderfer's theory, the hierarchy of needs is not as prevalent in Maslow's theory: an individual can engage in the desire to satisfy a growth need, even if a lower level need has not been previously satisfied. More importantly, Alderfer's theory allows for individual differences as he claims that the order of the needs may differ between individuals, whereas Maslow's hierarchy of needs was presented as universal.

McClelland need for achievement theory (1961) also allows for strong differences between the needs of individuals because he claims that individual needs result from one's own

personal experience and are socially acquired over time. Even if his theory was primarily meant for managerial situations, McClelland's definition of three main categories of needs can offer interesting parallelism for the current research. He considers that everyone is influenced by three types of needs: the need for achievement, the need for power and the need for affiliation. However, each individual is specific in terms of the mix of the three categories of needs, which in turn explains differences in behaviours. Schematically, those with greater achievement needs will be motivated by challenging tasks but will choose goals which are realistically achievable, thus avoiding high-risk activities, also because of fear of failure. They will tend to prefer individual work or group work with others high achievers. Power motivated people will look for situations where they can make an impact, develop their influence and a sense of control. McClelland makes a distinction between the need for institutional power where people will strive to use their power to collectively promote the success of a group, and the need for personal power, considered less desirable especially in work situations. Finally, people with a strong need for affiliation will tend to look for harmony and friendship in their relationships, concerned with their own popularity among a group and will tend to respect the norms of the group they belong to. According to McClelland, everyone feels a certain degree of need for achievement, power and affiliation, but the combination of those needs can greatly vary between individuals.

Deci and Ryan (1985) in their Self-Determination theory (SDT) investigated the relationship between individual needs and the social context. The main assumption of SDT is that people have a natural tendency to grow and develop, by taking on new challenges and experiences. Such natural tendency needs to be supported by the right social environment in order to bring about a healthy development of the personality. Deci and Ryan (1985) introduced the concept of basic psychological needs for autonomy, competence and relatedness and claimed that wellbeing will be experienced in social environments where these needs are consistently satisfied. On the contrary, the frustration of basic psychological needs will provoke ill-being. Like Maslow (1954), Deci and Ryan (1985) consider these needs as universal. However, they recognise that different cultural settings may facilitate their satisfaction to different extents. The need for autonomy represents the ability to make individual decisions on one's own and to regulate one's own behaviour. The need for competence refers to the ability to behave effectively within the environment and the need

for relatedness is seen as a universal drive towards the development of close relationships, such as friendship, love or group belongingness.

Many theorists concur in that motivation is caused by the desire to satisfy a need, even if they offer different classifications of human needs. In the present research, it can be assumed that the choice of a study path in higher education corresponds to high order needs, such as esteem needs (Maslow, 1954) or growth needs (Aldefefer, 1969). However, these categories of needs are too broadly defined for the purpose of the present research and have limited relevance to identify and analyse student motivations and choice factors. The evolution towards theories increasingly acknowledging individual differences in human needs, due to environmental context or individual characteristics, has pushed motivation theorists to introduce the notion of goal as a central determinant of individual behaviour.

2.3.3 Goals and individual beliefs in motivation theories

If Maslow theory (1954) already introduced the notion of goal as a central principle in motivation, the notion was further developed and investigated in subsequent theories, such as Vroom expectancy theory (1964). Vroom's theory focuses on three main aspects of motivation: personal goals, efforts which individuals are ready to engage into, and the rewards they expect from the outcome of their behaviour. It is probably one of the most widely recognised theories of motivation and well adapted to explain the process of individual decision making. In order to develop his theory, Vroom studied different work behaviours, among which the choice of occupation, which can be seen as very close to a choice of student path. Vroom's theory suggests that motivation is determined by three individual beliefs: Valence or the perceived value of the expected outcome of certain behaviour; Expectancy or the degree of confidence that the individual considers himself capable of performing a task successfully; and Instrumentality seen as the individual perception that a specific behaviour will actually lead to the expected outcome. According to Vroom, the combination of the three types of beliefs determines the motivation force. So the theory does not merely focus on the individual interest for rewards, but above all, on the efforts which individuals consider themselves capable of in order to achieve a task and

obtain the expected outcome. In the field of educational research, motivation theories have also moved from a behavioural perspective, where reinforcement or punishments were the drivers of behaviour, to a more cognitive perspective centred on the personality of students and their goals, expectations and beliefs (Svinicki, 1999). Cognitive models of learning introduce the notion of motivation in relation to the capacity of the learner to reflect on the consequences of their behaviour. An illustration is the expectancy value theory (Atkinson & Birch, 1978, Eccles, 1983) where expectancy represents the perceived likelihood of completing a task successfully and value the importance of the task for the learner. This theory presents a number of commonalities with Vroom's expectancy theory (1964) and the notion of expectation of success can be associated to Bandura's concept of self-efficacy (1977, 1993) which is the belief that one has the ability to cope with a specific task.

The notion of goal also plays an important role in cognitive models of learning (Schunk & Zimmermann, 1994). Students are supposed to work to reach a certain level of performance and the gap between their original level and their goal generates the motivation to learn. According to this theory, the motivation level increases when students realise that they are making progress towards their own set goals and also when they see the benefits of others who have already reached their performance goals.

Cognitive models have also investigated the relationship between motivation and what students consider as the main reason for their success or failure. This relationship is described in the attribution theory (Weiner, 1980) which claims that student motivation can be negatively affected if students believe that their success is due to external factors such as luck or their failure to external forces they have no control over. This theory introduces the notion of individual control as a component of motivation.

These more recent motivation theories tend to be structured around similar broad concepts: goals seen as the expected consequences of a behaviour, the value of the goals for the individual and the level of individual control to successfully reach the goals. Interestingly, similar theoretical constructs can be found in the Theory of Planned Behaviour developed by Ajzen (1985) which bears a lot of similarities with motivation theories, even if categorised as belonging to the field of social psychology.

2.3.4 Other approaches to motivation in educational research

A sub-theory of the Self Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985), called the Cognitive Evaluation Theory, develops the concept of intrinsic motivation, defined as a motivation for the behaviour itself (for instance, learning). Competence and autonomy are considered to play a critical role in fostering intrinsic motivation. Extrinsic motivation is defined as a fundamentally instrumental motivation where one expects a specific outcome from a behaviour (salary, reward, etc.) rather than performs the behaviour for its own sake. Deci and Ryan (1985) claimed that extrinsic motivations can be internalised by individuals, in which case the person will become more autonomous in performing the behaviour. They also claimed that autonomy and relatedness affect favourably the individual capacity to internalise extrinsic motivations. The centre of their theory is that environments which promote the sense of autonomy, competence and relatedness for individuals will lead to the greater level of motivation and engagement.

Researchers have investigated how students were learning, with the emergence of the concepts of deep and surface learning (Marton & Säljö, 1984; Entwistle & Tait, 1990), but they also reflected on why student would undertake higher education programmes and defined several educational orientations in order to account for the diversity of student motivations (Taylor, 1983; Dweck, 1986, Entwistle & Ramsden, 1983). In the goal orientation theory (Dweck, 1986), new vocabulary like mastery goal orientation, performance goal orientation, academic orientation, vocational orientation appeared and in combination with learning styles, they enabled the categorisation of students according to their overall educational orientation and learning approach. These findings have profound implications for the design of courses but one can easily imagine that such personal differences may also play an important role in the choice of a study programme, especially in the case of a selective programme such as the French German double degree.

The vocabulary and concepts provided by motivational theories help to identify and analyse specific student motivations for the FGP. However, another body of literature addresses student higher education choices and focuses on choice criteria in an endeavour to produce

models of college choice. Even if the present research concentrates on the choice of a study programme rather than a college, it is worthwhile to investigate this field of research in order to understand the main theoretical approaches.

2.4 Enrolment choice criteria

When it comes to the decision of a student to enrol in a specific study programme, most writers agree that there is a huge diversity of factors which can play a role in the decision process. As Southerland puts it (2006), “the number and variety of potential decision vectors is nearly infinite” (p. 15). However, different research approaches can be found in the literature, each of them studying the choice of an academic path from a specific standpoint.

2.4.1 The economic model

Influenced by the market ideology, higher education institutions are increasingly seen as organisations which need to meet the demand of society by producing graduates with the required profile to meet the labour market demand (Clarke, 2007). Grounded in a utilitarian perception of higher education, the economic model considers the student as a customer, a client or a consumer and introduces the notion of return on investment for the educational service provided (Cardoso, Carvalho & Santiago, 2011). This model suggests that the decision to attend a particular programme or enrol in a specific college can be assimilated to any other economic decision and thus explained through the lens of a cost/benefit analysis. Students are seen as rational beings with easy access to information on higher education careers and able to make rational decisions in order to maximise the benefit of their investment in higher education (Johnson & Deem, 2003), investment not only referring to tuition fees but also to the utility maximisation of other resources like time or energy (Hoxby, 2004). One of the most important factors in student enrolment decision is the overall image of the institution (Manski & Wise, 1983) and this image would be assessed against the perceived quality or prestige of its programmes, their cost, post-graduation opportunities but also non-academic factors such as extracurricular opportunities and location (Yugo & Reeve, 2007).

2.4.2 The psychological model

This model focuses on the individual characteristics of the student and claims that enrolment decisions are influenced by many psychological factors related to the personality of the student, including the level of motivation, the ability to adapt, its orientation to study. (Tinto, 1993). Similarly, Entwistle (1988a; 1991) argues that the reasons to choose a particular course may differ from one student to another: he claims that educational orientation depends on the type of student motivation and that some students may have an academic orientation and enter higher education mostly for the educational challenge while others may have a more vocational approach and expect that their qualification will enable them to find a work position after graduation. Similarly, learning approaches may also differ between students and affect both their motivation level and their degree of preparation for higher education (Entwistle, 1988a; Biggs, 1987).

2.4.3 The sociological model

This model emphasises the influence of social and environmental factors in the enrolment decision process of the student. Individuals cannot be separated from their social environment and have to deal with social pressures related to their status, race, gender, family traditions, and other social phenomena. Bourdieu and Passeron (1977) argue that individual subjective decisions are in reality affected by objective material, social and cultural structures and that they tend to reproduce the main social patterns. There is another side of the sociological model based on the theory of the self and identity (Giddens, 1991; Beck et al., 1994) which claims that individuals are constantly engaged in a reflexive process concerning their position within their social environment and that they can also shape social structures instead of simply reproducing them. This model concentrates on the social component of the academic experience and on the relationship between the individual choices and the environment.

2.4.4 Process models

Many authors describe the choice of a college or study path as a comprehensive process divided into successive steps leading to enrolment. According to Henrickson, process models consider the choice process as developmental and have “the ability to illustrate the interactions among individual students, institutional characteristics and external factors” (2002, as cited in Bergerson, 2009, p.21). Hossler and Gallagher (1987) have developed a model which identifies three successive phases in the college choice process: the predisposition phase where the potential student formulates the desire to engage in higher education, the search phase where the potential student gathers information on institutions according to his/her own value set and the choice itself. In each phase, a number of factors influence the move to the next step. In spite of its capacity to combine individual, external and institutional factors, the three-stage model was criticised for its focus on traditional post-secondary students when an increasing university population no longer fits in this category (Perna & Titus, 2004, 2005; 2005; Cabrera & La Nasa, 2001). The model assumes that all students have the same level of information and does not recognise the inequality of access to information for students from lower socio-economic backgrounds. The model is considered to underestimate the impact of psychological or sociological factors on student decisions, as well as the role of parental encouragements and school counselling staff in the choice of college (Bergerson, 2009).

The shortcomings of Hossler and Gallagher’s process model have pushed some researchers to refine the model. Among these more recent college choice models, Cabrera and LaNasa (2001) also propose a process divided in successive steps but they take into account a wider range of direct and external influences in the ultimate decision phase, such as parental characteristics for instance. In doing so, the model “illustrates the domino effect of certain factors in the process, illuminating the complexity masked by the linear structure of Hossler and Gallagher’s model”(Bergerson, 2009, p. 37). Aware of the need to integrate more deeply the influence of the context where the enrolment decision takes place, Laura Perna (2006) slightly moves away from the process model and offers a four layer model: the first layer focuses on the student background and builds upon Bourdieu’s concept of habitus (1985) which will be described in the discussion chapter; the second layer concerns the school and

community context, the third layer refers to the higher education context in a much broader sense and the final layer considers the social, legal, economic and political environment which according to Perna also affects the decision to enrol in higher education.

The most recent models of college choice reflect the complexity of the decision making process and tend to integrate an increasing number of variables into the equation. However, they do not fully apply to the research question as they fail to address the cross-border nature of the programme under investigation and the reasons which push students to choose an international study path leading to the award of two official qualifications from two different countries. For this reason, it is worthwhile to review the literature and investigate whether study abroad decisions follow a specific process or are motivated by specific factors.

2.5 Study abroad choice

Salisbury et al. (2009), supported by prior research (Paulsen & St John, 2002; St. John & Asker, 2001), make a parallelism between the enrolment decision and the decision to study abroad: they consider that “the process of deciding whether or not to study abroad is virtually identical to the process described by college choice theory” (p. 123). They argue that the college choice theory (Hossler et al., 1989; Paulsen, 1990) does not only apply to the enrolment decision but also to the persistence decision as other research works tend to demonstrate (Perna, 2006; MacDonough, 1997) and they assume that the same three stage model, with a predisposition stage, a search stage and the decision stage, can both explain enrolment decisions and decisions made during the course of the study programme, such as studying abroad.

There is a large amount of research on the added value of studying abroad and this study experience is widely considered to greatly impact the student personal development by providing a greater understanding of global and complex issues (Carlson et al., 1990), better cross-cultural communication skills (Anderson et al., 2006), increased openness towards other cultures (Kitsantas, 2004), better language skills (Brecht, 1993; Brecht & Robinson,

1993) and also improved self-confidence and overall maturity (Carlson et al., 1990). However, little research has attempted to identify the deep motivations of students to participate in a study abroad programme. According to Altbach (2004), students would choose to study abroad in order to acquire a truly global perspective necessary in today's globalised environment but this statement is far from describing the complexity of the choice process (Chen, 2008; Soutar & Turner, 2002; Shanka et al., 2006). In 2006, the Council on International Educational Exchange emphasised the paucity of research on study abroad decision processes and highlighted the need to look for hard data instead of relying on folk wisdom to assess student motivations (CIEE, 2006). Salisbury et al. (2009) stress that "almost no empirical research has explored the array and potential interaction of factors that affect intent to study abroad" (p. 121) and they call for additional research on the influence of financial, human, social and cultural capital on student decisions to participate in important educational experiences during their college experience.

Cubillo et al. (2006) also decided to investigate the international student choice process from an integrated standpoint and arrived at a theoretical framework based on a number of dimensions influencing the student decision, such as personal reasons, country image, institutional image and programme reputation. Although the model identifies a broad number of dimensions, the authors acknowledge that it fails at discovering their respective weight in the decision making process, as well as the interaction between them. They call for additional research in this field and recommend paying attention to the effect of country image on student decisions (Cubillo et al., 2006).

Similarly, McCarthy et al. (2012) carried out a quantitative study on a sample of 411 Canadian students in Buffalo (New York) to explain the factors influencing Canadian students to study in the United States. They identified push factors for not remaining in Canada and pull factors for choosing United States and its higher education system as an academic destination. However, they recognise that identified factors correspond to the specific group of Canadian students studying in the United States and they consider that additional "research on student mobility trends between two nations with significant student flows in other parts of the world would greatly add to the literature on globalisation in higher education" (p. 454).

Interestingly, all of these investigations have adopted a quantitative methodology and suggest a number of variables which should be considered in order to predict the intention to study abroad. They also share the assumptions that the choice of studying abroad, like the college choice, are decision processes going through different stages. But how does it work when the decision to enrol and the decision to study abroad are actually the same decision, as is the case for the French German double degree programme under scrutiny?

A recent paper from Tavares and Cardoso (2013) offers an interesting insight: trying to understand whether Portuguese students behave as rational consumers in their enrolment choices, their research seems to show that the rationality of the student choice prevails when “they decide to attend higher education and to choose a given institution, but not when they decide on attending a specific study programme”.(p. 297) According to them, the economic model of enrolment choice (Johnson & Deem, 2003; Hoxby, 2004; Avery & Hoxby, 2004), based on rational choices, is not fully applicable for the choice of a study programme and they claim that a key element in pushing student to choose a programme would be the socialisation process. Tavares and Cardoso (2013) adopted a qualitative approach, more adapted to understand the decision making in-depth phenomenon, and conducted sixty semi-structured interviews with first year students. Using content analysis techniques, they found out that the main reason for choosing an academic path was vocation, defined as a “strong feeling of suitability for a particular programme” (p. 305), rather than a rational cost benefit analysis of the programme.

2.6 Gap in the literature

The literature review enabled the identification of a number of motivation theories and motivational concepts which will help to understand the motivation process behind the choice of a higher education programme. However, most theories analyse the motivation process from a specific perspective and do not provide a general framework which can be easily adapted to uncover enrolment choice decisions. Besides they focus on motivation but often do not cover the decision making process which will turn motivation to act into real

action. Numerous college choice models were discovered, all of them trying to offer an explanation of student's enrolment choices but struggling with the almost infinite number of factors to consider (Southerland, 2006), and all of them situated in a specific research environment. The literature review shows that enrolment decisions are affected by needs, goals and expectations, but also by sociological and individual considerations like the socio-economics status, the family background, or student's values and personality. Thus, it seems logical that motivations and choice criteria will change depending on the context and the group of students being researched.

3 Methodology

3.1 Introduction

This chapter focuses on the methodological approach of the research and will present the different steps of the process followed in order to generate the data. The choice of a qualitative approach, within the context of the research aim and questions, will be justified and the theoretical framework chosen to support the analysis will be introduced.

3.2 Aim of the research

The aim of the research was to understand the deep motivations of students for choosing a specific study programme, which could represent a decision of a different nature, with considerations which may be more personal than the choice of a higher education institution (Tavares & Cardoso, 2013). Specifically, the research focused not only on the deep motivations of students for the FGP and on the profile of applicants, trying to highlight similarities and differences between ESCE and HWR registered students, but it also investigated the external or family influences which may have affected the choice of study path and the potential barriers susceptible to deter from registration. An additional purpose of the research was to enable the formulation of recommendations for ESCE and HWR for the future of their collaborative programme, and to provide FGU with useful information on student motivations in order for the institution to adjust its strategic positioning.

With the research population being composed of French and German students, the qualitative approach may be more efficient in discovering possible similarities or differences in the factors influencing the choice process between the two sub-groups of students according to their nationality or national environment. It would help to understand the influence which families and friends may have on the decision or in the potential barriers refraining students to apply.

3.3 Research methodology

Many research papers focusing on the reasons for choosing an academic path tend to adopt a quantitative stance to highlight statistically the factors which seem to motivate student choices (Tan & Laswad, 2009; Ingram et al., 2000; Yugo & Reeve, 2007; Briggs, 2006). The purpose of the current research differs in that it aims at understanding the deep motivations which impact students in what some researchers call a high-stakes involvement buying process (Chapman, 1986). As Bergerson puts it, “well-designed qualitative research is clearly needed that has the ability to fill in the knowledge gap left by these quantitative studies” (2009, p. 46). In order to address the complexity of this choice process, the research adopted a qualitative approach to understand the nature of the factors which motivate students to apply for the French German programme (FGP) and to identify recurrent themes which will emerge from the analysis.

Most of the previous approaches on college choice, whether psychological (Tinto, 1993; Entwistle & Tait, 1990), economic (Johnson & Deem, 2003) or sociological (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977; Tavares & Cardoso, 2013; Becker, 1993), provide a partial view of the factors affecting student decisions. As a consequence, process models of college choice have emerged (Hossler & Gallagher, 1987; Cabrera & LaNasa, 2000; Perna, 2006) and attempted to consider the complexity of the academic career choice by acknowledging that the range of direct or external influences is extremely vast. Many of these models have provided a wider list of vocational choice factors and tried to classify them in broad categories, such as Perna (2006) whose model covers the student background, the school and community context, the higher education context and the social, legal, economic and political environment. Because of their high degree of refinement in the number of variables considered, process models combined with a quantitative approach would be well adapted to deal with the general features related to college choice, but less valid to address the motivations and choice criteria of a more narrowly defined population. In the current research, students enrolling in a French German double degree programme do represent a very specific population and even if the traditional choice variables may apply, it seems reasonable to anticipate that their choice process will contain some very specific aspects which only qualitative analysis will be able to reveal. Perna (2006) recognises that there is a

lack of qualitative research in this area and recommends qualitative research in order to find additional dimensions of college choice. Similarly, Obermeit (2012) remarks that the only research on college choice in Germany is statistical and lacks the support of any theoretical framework; she thus acknowledges the need for qualitative research on college choice in Germany. In the field of college choice processes, researchers agree that a qualitative approach is particularly useful to analyse and understand the choice process of certain categories of students and the influence of the context on the decision (Gall, Borg, & Gall, 1996; Marshall & Rossman, 1999).

The nature of the research study made me reflect on the different qualitative approaches and their appropriateness with respect to the research design. The literature review emphasised the complexity of the choice process of an academic path and offered different models of college choice based on different epistemological perspectives. For instance, economic models of college choice tend to adopt an epistemological stance based on a positivist position: they are usually more concerned by facts than individual perceptions and often rely on quantitative approaches. My research being concerned with understanding the phenomenon of academic choice process in a social context, I adopted a different epistemology based on an interpretivist perspective and focused on the feelings and attitudes of students with respect to their academic orientation. My aim was to understand the way students made sense of their experience and to discover the reasons for their choice, situated in their specific individual context. Orientation choices are complex and depend on a set of circumstances which involve the individual and his/her own personal context. From a social constructionist standpoint, reality is socially constructed and social phenomena exist through the lens of people concerned with these phenomena (Saunders, 2011).

According to Ehrich (2005), phenomenology appeared at the end of the 19th century as an alternative to the dominant positivist philosophy which considered facts as reality and disregarded the individual experience or consciousness of this reality. Phenomenologists, on the contrary, considered human beings to be situated in the world and claimed that their perceptions could not be separated from the reality itself. From this philosophical tradition, phenomenology has evolved and progressively changed into a research methodology aiming

at providing an accurate description of human experience (Giorgi, 1971, as cited in Ehrich, 2005) and a deep account of a phenomenon. According to Gibson and Hanes (2003), phenomenology can help to “understand the complexity of human experience and gain a deeper understanding of the meaning of participants’ experiences” (p. 201). For these reasons, phenomenology appeared to me as the best way to capture student perceptions as well as the complexity of the choice process. Among the range of qualitative research options, I felt that phenomenological study was the most appropriate method to grasp students’ lived experiences and analyse the choice of their study path from their own perspective (Giorgi, 1997).

At the beginning of my research, I did not have any formal hypothesis to test with respect to my research topic. My approach was to rely on students’ perceptions in order to understand their motivations towards the FGP and to discover the meaning of their choice. Van der Mescht (2004) claims that phenomenology has the capacity to gain insight into unique and complex experiences outside of pre-established theories. For Ehrich (2005), “the contribution of phenomenology is its ability to uncover and unravel the essence of lived experience” (p.8). My objective was to analyse through a systematic process the descriptions provided by students during their interviews, to identify common themes in order to provide a general pattern of their motivations. Considering this purpose, phenomenology appeared to me as the right approach to build a data set and allow the emergence of themes for the analysis, all the more as no prior research had been carried out to understand French German students’ experiences and motivations.

3.4 Access and ethical considerations

Since the research involved two distinct higher education institutions, the detailed research proposal was sent to both ESCE and HWR Berlin and authorisation letters were obtained from each institution to carry out the investigation (see Appendix 2 and 3). Ethical permission was also sought and obtained from the University of Liverpool (see Appendix 1).

As an insider researcher, I had to be aware of the influence that my position within the research context would have on the data collection and data analysis process. In line with the mindful enquiry philosophy described by Bentz and Shapiro (1998), it was critical to reflect on my own position, identity, set of values and assumptions before undertaking the research and to acknowledge that my positionality was part of the richness of the research process. My own experience of the FGP, since I was one of the initiators of the programme, my interest in the future development of the programme for the benefit of the institution, my view of the collaborative link established with the German partner institution, my opinion about models of transnational collaboration and the future of European Higher Education, my perception of French and German educational approaches, and my values with respect to higher education in general were factors which I had to take into consideration throughout the research process. In order to reduce personal biases, my first task was to make them overt and to reflect on my own preconceptions or assumptions in relation to the topic under investigation. This self-reflective process helped me to better identify researcher's biases in order to keep them aside as much as possible during the research process and to concentrate on the experience of participants. This continuous bracketing process (Penner & McClement, 2008) was facilitated by regular conversations with my supervisor and the use of a research log.

Similarly, I had to be aware that my Deputy CEO position and my French citizenship could influence the data gathering process as I was dealing with individuals studying under my authority, even though the research was undertaken in my role of doctoral student. In order to minimise this potential influence, I considered the option of combining individual interviews with focus groups. In my view, focus groups would have reduced the relational risk and facilitated communication between participants, since my role would have been that of a moderator with less direct individual contact compared to face-to-face interview settings. However, participants were all distributed in different sites, some studying in Paris, some studying in Berlin, some in company placements in other locations and this practical limitation did not allow me to resort to focus groups. Realising that I could not combine different data collection processes, I thus concentrated on face-to-face interviews to gain insight into students' experience with respect to the FGP and kept in mind the relational risk during the data collection process.

In order to reduce any potential pressure on students, an invitation letter was prepared laying emphasis on the fact that participation was voluntary, that participants had the right to withdraw at any point of the research and that whatever the student response, there would be no academic consequences. The letter was submitted to the two course leaders of the FGP, asking them to distribute it among their respective students from year 1 to year 5. In doing so, the aim was to limit the potential pressure which my position as deputy CEO could have had on student participation and to use course leaders as intermediaries for the contact with potential participants. To minimise any potential relational risks, the Participant Information Sheet clearly stated that my research was carried out in my capacity of a doctoral student and not as Deputy CEO, and that all data would be anonymised. The invitation letters were sent by course leaders, along with a participant's information sheet (see Appendix 4) and a consent form (see Appendix 5) which participants had to complete and send back for my attention. I had no prior nor subsequent academic contact with participants, which was important so as to avoid unintended coercion to take part in the study.

3.5 Theoretical framework

The decision to enrol in a higher education programme is a "high-stakes high involvement buying process" (Chapman, 1986, p.250). This is particularly so in the case of the FGP which is a 5-year long academic path, including 2 years of expatriation in the partner country, one semester of in-company placement and providing tuition in three different languages.

Keeping in mind the limitations observed in the literature review, as well as the purpose of the research which is to understand the motivations and choice criteria of a particular group of students for a specific programme, I felt it was necessary to resort to a more global theoretical framework which would enable to encompass all the dimensions of the choice, whether economic, psychological, or sociological and would not only have explanatory power to understand motivations and choice criteria, but would also offer an explanation of

why the decision to enrol is actually made. The choice of the theoretical framework was made to inform the development of the data collection tools.

3.5.1 Theory of planned behaviour

This theory was developed by Ajzen (1985), as an extension of the theory of reasoned action previously established by Fishbein and Ajzen (1975). In the field of social psychology, the theory is built around the relationship between a set of individual beliefs and the intention to perform a specific action. According to the theory, the intention to perform any human behaviour is determined by three types of considerations:

- Behavioural beliefs, understood as the individual's belief that a certain behaviour will bring about certain consequences, positive or negative. They produce a favourable or unfavourable **attitude** towards the behaviour depending on whether the performance of the behaviour is positively valued or not.
- Normative beliefs: the pressure that the social environment puts on an individual to perform a certain kind of behaviour or not. They produce **subjective norms** more or less equivalent to the judgment of significant others. Subjective norms also depend on the motivation of the individual to comply with the normative belief. For instance, normative beliefs may not be followed if expressed by people whose opinion is not valued by the individual.
- Control beliefs: they are based on the individual's judgement about his/her ability to perform a task and they predict the level of **perceived behavioural control** that basically represents the perceived degree of difficulty or ease to perform a certain behaviour. The perceived behavioural control is not a motivational factor as such, but it has a great impact on the move from intention to action. It represents the perceived availability of skills, support, resources combined with the assessment that they will be sufficient to achieve the expected outcome of the behaviour.

The theoretical framework is often considered as a multi-attribute model (Gatfield & Chen, 2006) because each major belief group can be divided in a number of variables which have to be determined for each situation investigated. Combined, the attitude towards a behaviour, the subjective norms and the perceived behavioural control lead to an intention to perform a certain type of behaviour, which in turn affects the behaviour itself. The theory posits that the intention of the individual to perform the behaviour is all the stronger, as the subjective norms and attitude towards the behaviours are more favourable, and the perceived behavioural control greater.

The concept of beliefs allows a consideration of the effects of a great diversity of variables such as “emotions, personal characteristics, intelligence, value, age, gender, level of education, knowledge, experience and income, and race” (Ajzen, 2005, as cited in Acarli & Kasap, 2014, p. 499). The theoretical framework was especially useful to identify the determinants of a behaviour and in areas where the Theory of Planned Behaviour has not yet been used, it is recommended to carry out qualitative study to “establish the cognitive foundations of the target populations’ salient, most commonly occurring beliefs” (Walsh et al., 2015, p.2). The framework is thus very relevant to identify beliefs and to inform interventions aiming at changing existing beliefs, if considered negative to the performance of the desired behaviour. This feature proved to be significant for the discussion on the findings of the research and to make recommendations to practitioners.

Compared to the original theory of reasoned action, the theory of planned behaviour added the perceived behavioural control as an essential element to turn the behavioural intention into an actual behaviour. This addition was a consequence of the criticism of the theory of reasoned action which could not always explain why the intention to perform behaviour did not always lead to the actual behaviour. The behavioural control component, added by Ajzen (1985), derives from the concept of self-efficacy offered by Bandura (1977) and has a strong influence on the behaviour itself: basically, a favourable intention is turned into action if the perceived behavioural control is strong enough.

The theory of planned behaviour is both a descriptive and a predictive theory. It has been mostly used in health studies but also in advertising. It is considered as one of the most

powerful theories to predict human behaviour. Furthermore, it has also been used to measure international student motivations to choose an overseas university (Gatfield & Chen, 2006) or to identify the factors which influence business students in their intention to study abroad (Presley, Damron-Martinez & Zhang, 2010). In the educational field, other research projects have been carried out using the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) as a theoretical framework: Cohen and Hanno (1993) have analysed the factors affecting the choice of accounting as a major; Ingram et al. (2000) have used the TPB to understand and predict the application of students to postgraduate schools; and Pineda (2009) more recently adopted the TPB as a framework to investigate US student motivations to take international business courses. Their research reported in these articles demonstrated the validity of adopting the Theory of Planned Behaviour to investigate the motivations and behaviours of students in higher education contexts. Notably, Gatfield and Chen (2006) call for replications and extensions of their research in order to provide insights concerning the motivations of international students.

The present research aimed at identifying the main behavioural, normative and control beliefs of individuals with respect to enrolment in the FGP. The behavioural beliefs will help to understand the outcomes or benefits that students expect from the programme; the normative beliefs will review the different influences or social norms in favour or against enrolment in the FGP; the control beliefs will isolate the concerns or risks identified by students towards admission and successful completion of the programme and will provide insight on their perceived degree of preparation for the programme and on the external factors which may help them to graduate from the programme.

The theoretical framework took into account the specific context of the research, as well as the social and psychological characteristics of the study sample, in order to overcome the limitations expressed earlier concerning motivational theories and college choice models. The aim of the research was to identify the set of factors which contribute to the decision to enrol in order to understand the complexity of the decision process, including the aspects which are not in the direct control of the decision maker. The framework was considered well suited to the research question and would also provide course leaders, administrative

staff, marketing staff and programme designers with useful information on the choice process which will inform their own professional practice.

3.5.2 Interview schedule

An interview schedule was designed to carry out individual semi-structured interviews in order to collect the data. The theoretical framework which was used to define the questions was the Theory of Planned Behaviour (Ajzen, 1985, 2011). It has been used many times to address vocational choices and is considered a valid framework to investigate academic career choices (Cohen & Hanno, 1993; Ingram et al., 2000; Gatfield & Chen, 2006; Cheng & Chu, 2014). Other conceptual frameworks such as the Social Identity Theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1986), Perna's integrated model of college choice (2006) or motivational factors in student's approaches to learning (Entwistle, 1988a) were also considered in the design of the interview schedule but to a lesser extent (See Table 3.1 overleaf).

In the design of the interview questions, the choice was made to adopt a hybrid approach:

- The deductive component of the analysis is reflected in the design of the questions against a somewhat predetermined theoretical framework, as shown in table 3.1.
- The inductive component of the approach comes from the thematic analysis which would be carried out to analyse the data. The data was coded independently of a pre-existing coding scheme in order to allow the generation of new themes which did not necessarily fit in the chosen theoretical framework.

By doing so, the aim was to avoid introducing a research bias in the identification of key themes and to allow the generation of additional dimensions in the interviews besides those provided by the Theory of Planned Behaviour. The interview schedule was tested with a couple of participants and remained the same throughout the data generation phase.

TPB constructs	Interview questions
Introduction	- How did you come to be on the FGP between ESCE and HWR Berlin?
Behavioural beliefs & Attitudes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Reflecting on your decision to enrol, do you remember the main reasons why you opted for such a programme? - When you applied, what were the perceived advantages of being on this programme compared to other students in other programmes? - Looking backwards, to what extent the fact that you would obtain two Master degrees from two institutions was a motivator, perceived as an advantage? - Looking forward, do you think the FGP will influence your future professional career? In what way? Did you already have that in mind when you applied? - Before registering, how did you anticipate your experience in the partner country? How important was the location in your choice? - Tell me about your feelings when you decided to enrol? - To what extent do you see yourself as a European student instead of a French or German student? - Tell me about your approach to studies. Is there a typical student profile on this type of dual award?
Normative beliefs and subjective norms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What were the influences that you remember which pushed you to opt for this programme? Did you listen to recommendations of family members, friends? - How did your family and personal network react at your decision to choose this programme? - What did you know about the FGP? How did you know about it? - With your experience of the programme, would you recommend it to other students and why?
Perceived behavioural control and control beliefs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What information did you consider before making your choice? - To what extent did you consider the programme fees in your decision? - Can you think of other reasons which other students may have taken into account in their decision to enrol? - What it is about the programme that may not appeal to other students? Can you think of reasons which could prevent other students to register in such a programme? - In what way is the programme meeting your expectations? Are there any disappointment so far?

Table 3-1: interview schedule

3.6 Sample

The study group was composed of students registered on the FGP developed between ESCE and HWR. One of the main characteristics of the programme relates to the admission procedures: the agreement between the two institutions stipulates that they will strive to maintain a balance between French and German students. Each institution selects half of the total number of first year students, according to their own admission procedures, which may

differ because of their respective national regulatory environment. Every year, each institution would select 13 students for the 5-year degree programme and selected students would spend the first year at their home institution before forming a mixed group of French and German students and following the same study path in the last four years of the programme. Considering the drop-out rate of the programme, the total targeted population for the research was 85 registered students, with equal distribution between French and German students. For practical reasons, it was not possible to identify students who did not apply for the programme and the research focused on students already registered.

The final sample was composed of 14 participants and their main features are reflected in the Table 3-2 below. It is important to note that the sample was almost equally distributed between students registered with ESCE (n=8) and students registered with HWR (n=6). This was especially relevant considering the nature of the research and the interest in assessing potential dissimilarities between the two sub-groups. The gender distribution reflected quite well the actual composition of the total study group, as total female students registered on the programme represented up to 65% of the total population on the programme. In that respect, one can claim that the sample was a faithful representation of the whole student population.

Student (Pseudonym)	Age	Country of Birth	Home Institution	Nationality	Gender	Year of study
Corinne	18	France	ESCE	French	female	1st
Claudia	22	Germany	HWR	German	female	3rd
Henri	18	France	ESCE	French	male	1st
Susan	21	France	ESCE	French & American	female	4th
Véronique	20	France	ESCE	French	female	2nd
Hans	22	Germany	HWR	German	male	4th
Margarete	24	Germany	HWR	German	female	4th
Arthur	20	France	ESCE	French & Swedish	male	3rd
Lucie	19	Germany	HWR	French & German	female	1st
Bruno	21	Germany	HWR	French & German	male	3rd
François	23	France	ESCE	French	male	5th
Romy	21	United Kingdom	ESCE	English & German	female	4th
Christine	18	Germany	HWR	French & German	female	1st
Catherine	21	France	ESCE	French & German	female	3rd

Table 3-2 : Sample description

However, the distribution of students according to their academic year may have introduced a bias in the research. Indeed, only four first-year students (students who were still studying in their home institution and who had not yet experienced studying in a mixed group of French and German students) were interviewed out of 14 participants. Given that the research focuses on the motivations to enrol, it would have been more accurate to interview a majority of students for whom the decision to enrol was still rather recent. The limited population size and the sample composition did not allow such approach and as a result, the data analysis will keep in mind the risk of post-hoc rationalisation on behalf of students registered in later academic years.

3.7 Data collection process

To ensure privacy, individual interviews were conducted within a quiet office for students who were available on the Paris school site. Skype interviews were conducted from private settings on both sides for participants who were studying in Germany or doing an internship in a company. Interviews took between 45 and 60 minutes. All interviews were audio-recorded with the participant's permission and transcripts of the interviews were systematically sent to interviewees to ask them to check that they were faithful to what had been expressed during the interview. The same protocol of member verification was followed for all the interviews in order to ensure transparency in the research process and secure the validity, trustworthiness and quality of the research data (Gray, 2014). To ensure the confidentiality of the data, interview files were kept on a password protected computer and interviewees' names were coded in order to maintain the anonymity of participants.

3.8 Data analysis

After the interviews had been transcribed and checked by interviewees, all transcripts were entered into an NVivo file and coded with the support of the qualitative analysis software. According to Onwuegbuzie and Leech (2007), tools such as NVivo can improve the rigor of a qualitative study and many researchers concur in that qualitative data analysis software

programmes enable them to go much deeper in the data analysis than a manual approach (Bazeley, 2006; Kelle, 1996, Tesch, 1990; Leech & Onwuegbuzie, 2011). The software can also prevent the researcher from a number of deficiencies, such as “data overload, first impressions, information availability ... confidence in judgement, co-occurrence, and inconsistency” (Robson, 2002, as cited in Bergin, 2011, p. 7). Finally, Hoover and Koerber (2010) consider that transparency in the whole analytical process is another important advantage of using qualitative analysis software.

Using a thematic analysis approach, a total of 135 nodes or themes were identified in the process, for a total of 1621 references (i.e. total number of interview quotes associated to a theme). The nodes were grouped into categories, and categories were grouped into themes in line with the main theoretical constructs of the Theory of Planned Behaviour: concerns and control beliefs, influences and subjective norms, behavioural beliefs. Some additional emerging categories led to the addition of two themes: student identities, and motivations and goals. In total, five main themes were established from the categories. Then, the analysis focused on the issues mentioned by a high number of interviewees and the themes showing the highest number of references.

In order to allow for comparisons, a sample classification sheet was made with the following attributes: age, country of birth, home institution, citizenship, gender and year of study (see table 3-2). Bazeley and Richards (2000) suggest that the use of attributes in NVivo extends the value of the software from being a mere device for data management to being a tool “to assist in interrogating the data” (p. 153). Therefore, the table was referred to whenever necessary to make comparisons according to specific attributes, refining the analysis and seeing whether some attributes had a particular effect on the expressed themes. However, the only systematic comparison carried out was the distinction between ESCE and HWR registered students. This attribute was considered as a stronger structural component than citizenship in relation to the national educational context of each country and to the professional practices used by each institution. Two sub-groups were created in NVivo, one with students registered with ESCE as their home institution (8 students) and one with HWR registered students (6 students). This enabled isolation of the nodes and references for each

sub-group and potential differences between the ESCE and HWR students with regards to the recurrence of identified themes to be isolated (Table 3.3).

THEME 1: STUDENT IDENTITIES			
Categories	total references	HWR students	ESCE students
the individual and the group	52	31	21
level of motivation	18	11	7
types of students	2	0	2
values	94	44	50
citizenship	24	10	14
mobility as a value	21	11	10
Total	211	107	104
THEME 2: INFLUENCES & SUBJECTIVE NORMS			
Categories	total references	HWR students	ESCE students
influential others	180	78	102
image of institutions, FGP & FG students	46	16	30
image of Germany, Germans, German language and Berlin	89	6	83
image of France, French, French language and Paris	35	22	13
Total	350	122	228
THEME 3: CONCERNS & CONTROL BELIEFS			
Categories	total references	HWR students	ESCE students
Selection process	98	45	53
concern for expatriation period	52	28	24
concern for language level	22	9	13
academic concerns	60	33	27
economic concerns	54	31	23
barriers	15	8	7
control beliefs	23	9	14
Total	324	163	161
THEME 4: BEHAVIOURAL BELIEFS			
Categories	total references	HWR students	ESCE students
benefits of cultural diversity	28	10	18
benefits of French German connection	11	3	8
benefits of studying and working abroad	67	16	51
beliefs on double degrees	57	28	29
beliefs on international scope of FGP	46	26	20
beliefs on career prospects	29	10	19
Total	238	93	145
THEME 5: MOTIVATIONS			
Categories	total references	HWR students	ESCE students
life experience in two countries and languages	76	30	46
aspects related to the choice process of FGP	144	57	87
international career prospects	69	18	51
recognition advantage	56	17	39
advantage of two academic systems	53	17	36
importance of programme content	15	13	2
socialisation within mixed group	70	32	38
direct 5 year master	16	12	4
post hoc rationalisation	6	4	2
Total	505	200	305

Table 3-3: summarised data analysis table

The Table 3.3 offers a summarised view of the data analysis process and a comparison between ESCE and HWR students' references. A more detailed version of the data analysis tables presenting all the identified nodes can be found in Appendix 6.

3.9 Reflexivity

There is a large body of literature insisting on the importance of reflexivity in qualitative research (Anderson, 2008; Bover, 2012; Finlay, 1998; Finlay & Gough, 2008; Jootun, McGhee & Marland, 2009; Smith, 2006). As a novice researcher, it was essential for me to reflect on my own influence on the research process, from the interview phase to the reporting of findings and the interpretation of the data.

In the data collection process and the interaction with students, I had to establish a friendly atmosphere based on trust, respect and anonymity in order to facilitate communication on equal terms and limit the perception of authority that the participant may have regarding my functional role within the institution. On several occasions however, especially when dealing with sensitive subjects such as opinions on French or German educational approaches, perceptions concerning country images, institutional policies or tuition fees, it was difficult to assess the influence that my own position may have had on student discourse and the data generation process. This interaction may have pushed some students to focus on less controversial topics and to keep some personal comments for themselves. The interview recording process may have also made some participants more reticent to express their views with total freedom. In the same line, the interview process involved an important part of cross-cultural communication since I interviewed students from different cultural backgrounds, with the related risk of misunderstanding or misinterpreting students' comments. To limit these risks and to avoid risks of personal bias on my behalf, I would tend to repeat my questions in different ways and I would also encourage students to rephrase their answers in order to clarify their ideas. In doing so, it was highly important to push interviewees to express their personal opinion and not to influence them towards any particular viewpoint which I may have had on the topic.

The interview process probably gave some participants the opportunity to reflect more deeply on their reasons for choosing the FGP and it was important for me not to misrepresent their views. The interviews were carried out carefully, paying close attention to participants' view and isolating my own beliefs from the process in order to remain as neutral as possible and to avoid influencing respondents towards specific viewpoints. All interviews were then transcribed to allow member verification process and enhance the quality and validity of the data generated.

The data analysis also required strong self-reflective skills and the ability to isolate my own influence on the interpretation of data. Keeping a reflexive journal and actively discussing potential implications with my supervisor was crucial in this regard. As I was one of the initiators of the FGP, I had to constantly remain aware of the potential influence which my experience of the academic programme, my opinion concerning its benefits or shortages, and my feelings regarding the collaboration between ESCE and HWR could have on the analysis. Moreover, the research reactivated some personal memories concerning my own academic choices and my educational background: German was my second foreign language until I entered higher education and changed it for Spanish; I never used German language in a German context as I never had the opportunity to visit Germany during my school years; on the opposite side, learning Spanish influenced my higher education experience as it enabled me to participate in a mobility programme in Madrid and consequently, to start my professional career in Spain. Some comments made by participants during the interviews recalled personal memories and feelings towards my own relationship with Germany and the German language. Being aware of my own views and beliefs concerning the choice of an academic path was a necessary step in order to reduce my own researcher's bias and concentrate on students' experience without distorting the process with personal considerations. On some occasions, my closeness to the programme certainly helped me to better grasp participants' views and to push the investigation further. On other occasions, I had to control my own subjectivity in order to avoid projecting my own interpretations on participants.

Another challenge in the data analysis was to accept unexpected topics to arise and to listen to dissident voices instead of selecting those comments which were closer to my own assumptions of the phenomenon. In that endeavour, the use of NVivo helped me to minimise my researcher bias and to increase the rigour of the analysis, by providing a formal framework for the identification of themes. If I share Bentz and Shapiro's belief that "pure objectivity is unattainable" (1998, p.77), I attempted to isolate my own beliefs and values from the research process in order to provide a faithful picture of participants' view.

4 Findings

4.1 Introduction

This chapter commences with a focus on the main features of student identities. Then, student's subjective norms and influences are addressed, followed by a presentation of their concerns with regards to their application decision. The main students' behavioural beliefs concerning their choice of academic path are also examined. Finally, students' motivations and choice criteria will be exposed.

4.2 Theme 1: Student identities

In order to understand the motivations and choice criteria of students for the French German programme (FGP), it was necessary to focus on the study sample and explore the main characteristics of those who applied for the programme.

4.2.1 Student citizenship

The composition of the sample briefly described in the methodology chapter deserves to be further explored, especially when it comes to the citizenship of students. The group can be split in two sub-groups of identical size between students with a single citizenship and those with two different nationalities. Among the seven students with single citizenship, four were French born and three were German born. Among the seven students with two nationalities, four were both French and German, one was English and German, one Swedish and French, and finally one was American as well as French. It seems unusual to have similar patterns in higher education programmes, with such a high proportion of students who by birth already possess a double culture. Interestingly, such a distinctive feature can be found on either side of the border as it applies both to students registered with the French and the German institution alike. Of a total of eight interviewees registered with ESCE, four had French citizenship while four had two different nationalities. Of a total of six students registered with HWR, three were German only while the remaining three had two nationalities (French

and German). This very specific feature in the composition of the sample is a first common characteristic between the two institutions offering the programme. No matter how different the admissions procedures may be between the two schools, the programme ends up attracting similar student profiles, when it deals with citizenship. With this in mind, the original approach aiming at comparing two sub-groups of students according to their nationality was considered no longer valid, as the different categories overlapped and students could not be defined solely by their citizenship. However, the fact that half of the sample was composed of single citizenship students and the other half of students born with two nationalities is an important finding since it shows that the programme attracts students who are already French German (or students with two nationalities) but also students with one single citizenship, either French and German, and apparently in comparable proportions. The distinctions between single and double citizenship students may prove more useful in the data analysis than the mere distinction between French and German, which does not really apply here.

More important even is the split between students originally registered with the French institution (n=8) and those originally registered with the German institution (n=6). A common admission procedure requires that the applicant be resident in the country of the institution where he/she applies. The purpose of such procedure is to avoid the case of students who may apply to the other institution after receiving a negative answer from the institution of their home residency. This rule basically implies that a student completing secondary education in Germany will apply for the programme at the German institution, while those completing secondary education in France will apply to ESCE. As a consequence, ESCE applicants had their residency in France when they applied and thus were immersed in the French secondary education system, while HWR applicants came from an educational background in Germany. Access to higher education is so much determined by the local environment and the link between secondary and higher education (Palfreyman & Tapper, 2005) that a comparison between ESCE registered and HWR registered students may well prove more revealing than using the citizenship criteria. For the purpose of this study, after coding all the interviews with NVIVO, I thus decided to create two sub-groups of students according to their institution of registration, in order to allow comparisons in motivations and choice criteria across the border between France and Germany.

4.2.2 Student values

Student identities are best described by their values and students seem to share a common value system, based on ambition, work and efforts as central values. These sentiments are best expressed in the following quotes:

“We are all rather ambitious within the group; we are all rather similar” Christine

“I believe that most of us share the same values” Margarete

Students on the programme describe themselves as ambitious, serious, hard-working students, with a high commitment to their studies and high degree of motivation and perseverance. Whenever they compare themselves with students from other study paths, they tend to consider their group as more ambitious and more focused on achieving not only good results but also higher goals.

“I think we are more ambitious than other students at HWR. We are still rather focused on grades but I think we are very ambitious and very motivated to achieve high goals” Lucie

“I think our level of commitment is greater than in other programmes” Margarete

Such level of commitment to their studies does not seem to affect the collective nature of their study experience. Many interviewees placed their individual values in a collective perspective, insisting on their desire for personal relationships among the group. They defined themselves as open-minded individuals, interested in human relationships, eager to meet new people, with a strong team spirit. Some even seem to consider open-mindedness as requirement to be admitted on the programme:

“What is clearly necessary is open-mindedness” Bruno

In my sample, being part of the French German community was definitely a key element of motivation and students seemed to consider that their own values were aligned with the values of this specific community. The group itself was seen as an environment preserved from competition, where students share values and motivation (or even passion) for a similar cause, a similar project, as illustrated in the following quote:

"The group is like a circle and the circle can be expanded outside but there is no need to compete outside because everyone goes in his own direction and I don't see any competition" Hans

Students understand that in order for the group to progress and in order for students to be successful and have a fruitful experience within a group of such a limited size, they have no other choice than create positive group dynamics:

"We are 20 to 24 students, a small group which always stays together and will learn to work together, to develop a group dynamic, to make the group progress and have the best possible conditions to work" Catherine

This group dynamic was also perceived as a potential risk for students who realise that if the atmosphere within the group is not managed properly, the study environment can easily become unbearable. Thus, students are willing to make the necessary efforts to maintain the group cohesion and align individual objectives with that of the group.

"If the atmosphere is good, and if everything works out well, this is great, it cannot be greater. But if this is the opposite, things can go wrong" Christine

There is sense of maturity and unity towards a shared objective that goes beyond individual interests and this pushes students to adapt their attitude, as expressed in the following quote:

"If we wish to be well considered in the programme and not seen as useless in the class, then we are obliged to work a lot more" François

Some ESCE students believe that the group is driven by the motivation of HWR to obtain good results and seem to feel a greater degree of competition among the group than HWR students, even if it is best described as emulation or healthy competition.

This is where team spirit and the capacity to help one another come into play to relieve the strength of the perceived internal competition.

"There is really a lot of mutual assistance. If someone is missing something, we will give it to him immediately" Véronique

"I am someone who supports the others in order to succeed together. By helping others, I help myself" Hans

Students within the group act as if they had embarked on the same journey on a boat where every member of the crew has to perform efficiently for the boat to reach its final destination. This reflects not only a high level of maturity but also a capacity for strategic thinking and reflexivity.

4.2.3 Prior experience and mobility

Looking at students' prior experience was also quite enlightening. Almost all the interviewees explained that they either participated in an exchange programme or a mobility programme during their school years, or spent a year in a foreign country at the end of the secondary education. This common feature appears to be independent of the single or double citizenship of students and shows a high level of global awareness. Of course, most of the mobility experiences took place in the partner country, either France or Germany, but they were not limited to the French German landscape as some students went as far as Québec or Australia. For some students, the national geography seemed too narrow and some even explained that they needed to evolve in an international environment in order to "survive". They definitely placed themselves in a global perspective for their studies and future lives.

"I would not have stayed on a programme where I could only spend a year abroad, I think I would not have survived it, I would have felt miserable" Catherine

"I was born in Berlin and we moved very early to Munich, then I have lived for six years in the United States and Canada. So for me, it was extremely important to have something international with a lot of movements" Lucie

"Until I was 10, I have lived in Munich and then my father was sent to Grenoble where I have studied for three and a half years." Margarete

"We did an exchange programme with a school in Bavaria in Troitzberg" Corinne

"Very often, I had the opportunity to go to Germany, with my school, or through an exchange programme with a German penfriend. With my family, we also went to Berlin for summer holidays and to Dusseldorf" Henri

"At the end of school years, I knew I wanted to study in Germany because I had made a lot of exchange programmes and I had been in a German European class when I was

at school". Véronique

This need for mobility or movement can be related to the sense of curiosity that students have expressed as one of their values. Discovery was closely related to mobility and the ability to experience a new environment and learn from it.

4.2.4 Perception of citizenship and European spirit

Interestingly, students strongly relate mobility and the experience of living in another country with the perception of their national identity. Single citizenship students comment that they do not *"only"* consider themselves as French or German students and that this notion is restrictive and can evolve in the future, depending on their mobility programmes and life experiences in other countries. They seem to distinguish their official citizenship from their own perception which can change according to the environment.

"French because I have not moved from Paris yet. I think this is not rigid but for the moment, I am French" Corinne

"I don't really consider myself as French. I consider myself much more European" François

"I feel French because of my cultural background but I don't feel only French" Véronique

"It can't be said that I am not German. It is my responsibility to understand the challenges of my socialisation and to make the most of other cultures" Hans

"European because I am part of a FGP, I travel a lot, I have many friends in Europe" Margarete

Double citizenship students also tend to relate the country of residency with the perception of their nationality and to be attracted by a certain European ideal. However, instead of feeling both French and German, they rather tend to feel neither French nor German, as illustrated in the following quotes:

"French student, not really, German student, not either because I have not been a German student yet, rather European student then" Catherine

"I do not have a nationality which is more applied to me. When in France, I feel I have

a German mentality and when I am in Germany, I realise to what extent I am not German at all” Romy

“Rather German student as I have never lived in France. I studied in a bilingual class but I was always a little more German, except for the French school system, then I am more French”. Christine

Clearly, for this sample, double citizenship students do not consider themselves as students with two nationalities, but rather as a different community which does not fully overlap with any of the two nationalities. Nor, they feel that they do not belong to any particular nation, which enables a certain European spirit to be underlying in their comments.

“I did an internship in the US and this enabled me to realise how much I felt European” Arthur

“With the 50th anniversary of the Elysée Treaty and the importance of the links between France and Germany, as I felt I was on both sides, I felt I was European” Romy

The findings suggest that the citizenship perception of FGP students goes beyond the belongingness to one or two countries and integrates both a sense of supranationality and a differentiation dimension.

4.2.5 Learning approach

The analysis of the data did not highlight any specific learning approach which would be specific to students applying for the FGP. Here again, it is difficult to isolate the learning approach from the learning environment and the notion of learning seems to evolve throughout the programme over time and across borders, when students are immersed in different institutional contexts.

“I think my mentality has changed a bit and that I learn differently” Margarete

“At that time, I was studying to obtain the appreciation of my teachers” François

Since the learning approach seemed to evolve during the FGP, it is particularly difficult to obtain reliable data on the type of learning approach that students had upon admission. The data shows evidence of differences which do not correspond to the institution where

students are registered, nor to national status. As an illustration, two ESCE students have the following comments:

"If I do not have someone behind me motivating me, I will not give my very best"
Catherine

"I like to work in an autonomous way" Romy

What appears to be a shared trait is the capacity to adapt to the learning environment. There are frequent comments comparing the evaluation system between ESCE, where regular assessments are carried out, and HWR, where students are mostly assessed through final exams. ESCE system would be pushing students to focus on grades whereas HWR system would make students more responsible of their own learning. Students seemed to be well aware of the differences between the two systems and able to adapt their learning strategies in order to be effective. This may explain differences of perceptions between ESCE and HWR students sometimes, with some comments such as:

"In Germany, they all study in order to get the best grades" Véronique (ESCE student)

versus

"Grades are important but I try to more detached about them" Bruno (HWR student)

or

"After studying at ESCE, I felt like deepening my knowledge, learning more and having good grades" Christine (HWR student)

The view that HWR students, and German students in general, would be mostly interested in grades is not reflected in the present analysis. Grades remain important, especially in Germany, because a German employers usually ask applicants to provide the full record of their study transcripts, whereas French employers tend to simply ask for a copy of the Degree without paying great attention to grades. However, it seems simplistic to conclude that HWR students have a surface or strategic approach focused on grade achievements only. They definitely show clear signs of a deep learning approach, just as their ESCE counterparts:

“It’s always more important to acquire competences than getting good grades” Lucie (HWR student)

“We think about what we studied, we ask ourselves what we can get out of it and this is motivating” Catherine (ESCE student)

To summarise, the learning approach differs between students of the programme but their capacity to adjust to different learning environments is a common feature which emphasises their flexibility. This flexible approach can be related to the strong taste for mobility developed by students who definitely consider their study path as an opportunity for a life-changing experience.

4.2.6 Conclusion

Both the composition of the study sample and the findings from data collection illustrate a high level of coherence among French German students. This coherence is structured around a shared system of individual and collective values, based on ambition, work and efforts, as well as mutual assistance, open-mindedness and curiosity. This value system is combined with global awareness and a sense of supranationality, usually fostered through early mobility experiences. FG students also demonstrated the ability to adjust to learning environments and adopt flexible academic approaches.

4.3 Theme 2: Influences and subjective norms

4.3.1 Influential others

Given the composition of the sample, with half of the interviewed students having double nationality, it was to be expected that the family background would strongly influence the choice of study path. Obviously, French German born students were already on the “right track” to end up applying for a FGP. Only two students from the sample, one with a French background and the other with a German background, considered that their parents had not really influenced their choice. The rest of the sample willingly acknowledged the influence of parents in a decision which is perceived as an important step in their life. Most of the

students seemed to trust in the capacity of their parents to provide support and advice for a decision which would influence their life for at least 5 years and possibly many more. However, students claimed to have made the decision themselves, even if recognising the influence or advice of their parents:

"My father played a great role in my studies because he is of good advice...after, it's often my responsibility to choose but at least I have all the elements" François

"I often ask for their advice for important decisions ...it's true that their opinion was important to make a decision" Susan

"My parents, they let me make my own choices. When I have questions, they give me advice" Margarete

"It's really a personal choice and my parents support me in everything I do" Margarete

In this research, it seems that parents have always maintained close relationships with their children when dealing with aspects related to their personal development or their studies.

Focusing on the case of students who were born either French or German provides great insight on the nature of parental influence on student choices. The research shows that this influence begins very early and has multiple ramifications. Usually, it starts with the choice of the foreign language studied at school, at an age when students are too young to decide on their own. Interestingly, this choice of foreign language is very often influenced by the foreign language studied by parents themselves or the personal experience of parents.

"My family is purely French but they all studied German at school and they pushed me to study German. Both my parents, my brother, my sister, everyone has studied German" Véronique

"My French mother who is also a French teacher influenced me" Bruno

"Since we have Vietnamese origins, my mother learnt French" Claudia

"My father was an 'au-pair' in Paris in a family; my mother went to France and Spain as an 'au-pair'" Margarete

There is a strong element of reproduction in the choice of a foreign language which is usually negotiated between parents and children. Parents, consciously or not, integrate personal

and sometimes emotional elements in the influence they have on their children, as if they wanted their children to experience the same as they experienced at the same age.

“My father and my mother got to know each other thanks to trips between Germany and France” Bruno

This early choice of language broadly influences the educational and personal experiences of students. Most interviewed students have taken educational trip to the partner country or even spent one or several years studying in the partner country during their school years. Many had spent holidays with their parents in the partner country. Other students had made the choice with their parents to register in international classrooms or in French German institutions. As a result, almost all interviewed students had developed friendships in the partner country early on, as well as a strong taste for the partner country thanks to the repeated experiences they had. The only exception was a German student who had not been to France but had spent an entire year in Quebec to learn French. The research shows that some very early decisions, in which parents play an essential role, greatly impact the propensity to apply for a FGP.

Following the parental influence, students recognised the influence of their language teachers. Some students have built a strong relationship with their French or German teachers during the school years, to the point that they are still in contact with them now that they are higher education students.

“I kept in touch with my German teachers, I write them letters” Corinne

“My French teacher I really liked because she did a great job and she made us want to go to France” Claudia

“Last year, I had talked to my former German teachers ...and they all told me that it could only be beneficial” Véronique

“I had a teacher that strongly motivated me for that” Véronique

Language teachers play several roles in that they motivate students for the language and the partner country, they provide guidance on possible higher education study paths, and in particular they provide information on French German programmes usually during their language class.

"I chose the advanced French class and we talked about the possibility to take a FGP"
Bruno

Some secondary schools also organise trips to attend the French German Forum, a conference organised on a yearly basis where French German programmes are promoted. However, it is to be noted that there are obvious inequalities concerning the access to the information on French German programmes, depending on the school students are attending. The information seems to be mostly disseminated among secondary schools with a track record in French German education but not in all secondary institutions. As one student remarked:

"Even my French teacher did not know French German programmes. It was crazy; one cannot believe that a French teacher does not know this kind of programmes" Hans

The third influence comes from relatives or friends that are or have been studying in French German programmes. Again, the influence is two-fold: these friends can act as role models, who trigger the motivation for the programme:

"This friend was at ESCE but not in the programme. She said to me: look, this is for you, she sent me the link to the programme and this is how it happened" Véronique

Or alternatively they can be seen as information providers who may comfort students in their choice of applying for the programme. In the latter situation, contacts tend to happen once the decision to apply is almost or already made and students basically look for additional information from peers who have already experienced a similar study path.

"Above all, I contacted the student to get information" Christine

"I quickly looked for students who were on the programme and contacted them personally to exchange and learn what it was about" Hans

ESCE students referred to a more institutional influence, in relation to the promotion of the programme directly carried out by ESCE. This is specific to ESCE students and related to the marketing and admission practices of the school. This is why HWR students do not mention any similar influence. ESCE participates in student fairs to promote its educational programmes, among which the FGP. For these events, ESCE relies on current students who

communicate with potential students about their own experience. The organisation of the main oral examination to enter ESCE (and not the FGP) is another key opportunity to promote the FGP: candidates are driven by ESCE students who can provide information on the different study paths and examiners can also mention the FGP to students who show potential for the programme.

“I knew the programme but having the opportunity to discuss with students made me want to apply” Susan

Finally, the French Germany University (FGU) was mentioned as another source of influence. The institution positively influenced students in their choice: first, the website offers a catalogue of all accredited French German programmes in which students can browse easily; second, the accreditation by the FGU reassures applicants in their choice because it provides an additional study certificate on top of the degrees awarded by ESCE and HWR and because it offers an official framework to support French German programmes and help them to develop.

“The FGU will always be there in case there is a problem...we are never left alone and this also pushed me a little to choose the programme” Christine

However, student comments show that there is a lack of communication on the FGU. At the time they applied, many students did not know the FGU and those who knew it did not exactly understand what it stands for.

“I only understood two years ago the real responsibility of the FGU and the role it plays” Margarete (a fourth year student)

“When I applied, I did not know at the beginning that there was a FGU” Bruno

This lack of reputation of the FGU even pushed a student to consider the current research as useful to enhance the fame and recognition of the institution.

“It’s important to carry out research in the framework of the FGU, a research like yours can help to build up its reputation” Bruno

In spite of the different influences identified, students did stress that their decision to apply and to register was a personal decision. Maybe, all influences were progressively integrated in their own set of preferences and eventually became a representation of their own

opinion. Whatever the process behind the decision making, students felt that the ownership of the choice of the FGP was entirely theirs, while admitting that their surroundings participated in the choice process by providing guidance, opinion and support.

4.3.2 Image of the FGP, of the institutions, of FG students

The FGP and the French German students benefit from a very good reputation among students, faculty, administrative staff and alumni. Several comments show that the programme is presented as an elite course, more demanding than other programmes, designed for students with high potential, capable of working harder than their peers from other courses. This reputation of the programme blends with the image of French German students who are expected by other students, faculty and alumni to be more serious and determined than other categories of students.

“If the other students know that it is additional work, that you need to be more serious, more focused all the time, that justifies the image they have of the programme” Susan

“At ESCE, when we arrived, without doing anything, we already had a very good reputation among professors” Bruno

“What people say about the programme, it’s always, you are an elite, you are very good, you have all the opportunities thus the internal and external image of the programme is that of a small elite” Margarete

The image of the institutions offering the programme was also mentioned by half of the interviewed students, who looked for information which would certify the status of both institutions and the quality of the programme.

ESCE students referred to rankings published in specialised magazines or to the general belief that Grandes Ecoles offer good quality programmes.

“There are all the rankings of business schools which I had studied with my father” François

“I heard that Grandes Ecoles in Paris have a very good reputation” Claudia

HWR students pointed out that there is no such tradition of establishing rankings in Germany, except maybe for universities, and students seemed to resort to word of mouth, public opinion, or internet to guess the quality of an institution.

“I had heard that HWR was a good school for economics” Lucie

“My father was very pleased because he had looked on internet and found out that it was a good programme in economics” Lucie

In any case, the influence of the reputation of the school was a criteria spontaneously mentioned by only half of the interviewed students. Whether students have chosen a study programme rather than an institution is thus a valid question.

4.3.3 Image of Germany and the German language

The following comments come from ESCE students and help to understand how deeply their choice of Germany and the German language goes against the mainstream opinion. According to ESCE students, a large majority of French students have a negative image of Germany. The country suffers from a number of stock ideas shared by people who have never been to Germany and know little about the country. Most of their friends consider Germany as a dull destination, too close geographically, less exotic and less glamorous than other countries such as the United States, Brazil or countries located at the other end of the globe.

“It is less glamorous to say I’m going to Germany for two years than say I’m going to the US for two years” Corinne

“Tell someone you are going to spend the next years in Germany, it’s not as flashy as going to United States, Mexico or Latin America” François

“They are not interested in living two years in Germany; they prefer more exotic destinations than Berlin which is quite close from Paris” Susan

“When we talk of Germany, it’s not a country that makes people dream” Arthur

ESCE students seemed to be used to the clichés concerning Germany among French population and they provided some illuminating examples:

"The cliché they have on Germans is Germans at a camping site who make a lot of noise and wear plastic shoes with socks" Véronique

"Germany, in the mind of some people, it's people who wear hats, who eat sausages and pretzels, listening to folkloric music" François

These clichés are presented as all the more unjustified when those expressing them have never taken the time to visit Germany nor to meet Germans. ESCE students have a diametrically opposed opinion about the country and insist on the incredible difference between the image of the country and its reality. Their image of Germany is that of a welcoming country, with good quality of life, powerful economically and they see Germans as open and sympathetic. There is a huge gap between their perception of Germany and the general opinion about the country. Their love of the country, based on their own real experience of the country, stands in complete opposition with the bad image shared by a majority of people.

"It was a totally different way of life and I loved it" "I have a passion for Germany" Corinne

"I immediately identified myself with the culture, it's a culture I really liked" Henri

"Going to Germany, meeting people ...made me love the country and the language" Susan

Versus

"The caricature of the German is not particularly glowing" Arthur

"I think many do not like Germany by definition, without having been there" François

As a result, ESCE students seemed to feel different from the rest of the population and somewhat isolated and misunderstood.

"I have a passion for Germany, it's almost incomprehensible for others, they do not understand" Corinne

Their passion for Germany pushes them to fight against prejudices but with limited hope that this will change the view of those around them. In a way, ESCE students identify themselves by resisting against a general opinion which they consider unfair.

"We need to stress that many people think Germany is not an extraordinary country but that these ideas are false" François

"With some people, it's not even worth trying to defend Germany because they will not change their mind" François

"I try to make them change their point of view but it's an everyday fight" Véronique

They are in complete opposition to the subjective norm related to the image of Germany and this makes them different. In short, the subjective norm influences them adversely and probably pushes them to apply for the programme to stand for their own beliefs.

A very similar phenomenon can be observed regarding the image of the German language. The general view is that of a language which is difficult to learn, not as useful as other languages such as Spanish, and a language experiencing a downward trend among students. Again, ESCE students stand in complete opposition to the general opinion on the language and oppose their pleasure of learning German, their love of the language, and the professional advantage of speaking the language in Europe to the mainstream ideas on the language. They stress that they discovered the use of German when they travelled to Germany and explain the lack of interest in the German language by the lack of experience of the country.

"I discovered the use of the German language when I went to Germany. Students do not see what they can get out of the German language" Corinne

ESCE students felt that their choice of German automatically places them in a different category, a sort of a minority who thinks differently and is vested with the image of seriousness of the German language.

"First, choosing German is already a difference" Corinne

"At that time, I was the only one to choose German at school" François

"People who study German are considered as serious. I think it is much more related to the image of the language than we think" Susan

Like French German born students who did not consider themselves as French or German, French students who love Germany and the German language seem to form a different

category, which shares common interests and disagrees with a number of subjective norms of their environment. This feeling of being different and standing for one's own ideas may be a common trait of French German students.

4.3.4 Image of French language

Contrary to their ESCE counterparts, HWR students did not mention the image of France in their interviews. This aspect seems to bring less controversy than the image of Germany for French people. The only comments made by HWR students refer to the French language; apart from the passion or love they expressed for the language, they also seemed to consider that learning French is a source of differentiation for them, compared to learning English which they considered as a language spoken by almost everyone.

"This group is very motivated by the passion for French language" Lucie

"I said to myself, it's more exotic, more extraordinary, more different than English and German" Claudia

Overall, French language is seen as a difficult language to learn (same image as German among French people), a challenge, but learning French is well considered, which strongly differs from the image of the German language in France.

"If you know how to speak French, it's well regarded" Claudia

There is a strong difference between the image of French language, as described by HWR students, and the less positive view that French people hold on the German language, according to ESCE students. However, both languages are considered as difficult to learn and as a source of differentiation by FG students.

4.3.5 Image of Paris and Berlin

For a couple of students, the location of the two partner institutions did not seem to be critical in their decision to apply for the programme.

"The city was not a criterion at all" François

"It was exciting it's true but had it been another city, I still would have done the programme" Véronique

However, a majority of students share a positive view of both cities and agree that it may have had an influence on their choice.

"Yes, the fact that the programme was between two capital cities was important"
Susan

"Studying in two big European cities, studying in Paris and Berlin, I found it to be very interesting from an international perspective" Arthur

Since they consider the programme as a personal experience that goes beyond the academic aspect, students anticipate a richer experience in Paris and Berlin than in other locations. They emphasise the cultural dimension of both cities, their role as major European capital cities, and their cosmopolitan crowd. All these aspects generate interest, attraction and curiosity among students.

"I was rather interested in Berlin ... I felt I would experience more things and that the city had to offer a larger range of activities" Romy

"Many students wanted to go to Paris, it was important for them; they really wanted to go to Paris because it is Paris" Lucie

The link between the two cities was also stressed as an added value for the programme, especially in comparison with other French German programmes.

"Between Paris Berlin and Reutlingen Reims, concerning the location, I was rather focused on Berlin and Paris" Bruno

At the same time, students are aware that the two cities are very different; Paris is seen as a beautiful, quite traditional and expansive city whereas Berlin is considered as a less conventional, more modern and more affordable financially especially for students.

4.3.6 Conclusion

To summarise, I have identified the influential others and subjective norms which have had a direct or indirect impact on the choice of the French German degree. The strongest influence certainly comes from the family background, the early choice of foreign language and from school exchanges in the partner country. The combination of these three factors have created a predisposition for the FGP and the choice of students was supported by additional factors such as their perception of the French German programmes in general, their bond to the partner country and its language, and their curiosity to study in two major European cultural capital cities. At the same time, students opting for the programme seem to follow more or less consciously a strategy of differentiation in comparison with the regular student population.

4.4 Theme 3: Concerns and control beliefs

4.4.1 Selection procedure and student motivation

An unanticipated theme which emerged from the qualitative analysis was the role played by the selective admission procedure on students' motivation. The selection procedure was perceived by students as a real challenge and as an opportunity for them to test and prove their motivation for the programme. They were aware of the small admission rate for the programme but nevertheless, some decided to take their chance and apply. They realised that some students may be deterred to apply because of this higher level of selection compared to other programmes and argued that there is certainly a self-selection of applicants for the programme, as some may not even bother to apply considering they have very limited chances to be admitted.

"I asked if the percentage of admitted students was high in order to know the level of competition for the programme and determine whether I would opt for a another study path" François

"Some may have considered their level was too low, that it was far too selective and that they would never succeed" Susan

"Many students fear to be disappointed and don't even apply, even if the programme would be perfect for them" Lucie

"At first, I thought these business schools would be inaccessible for me because I felt the selection was very hard" François

The decision to apply for the programme supposes the capacity to take the risk to be refused and to overcome this feeling of potential failure. The negative aspect of the selection is the risk of missing some potentially good applicants because they may fear the process.

Once the decision to apply is made, applicants adjust their strategy and efforts to their perceived probability of being admitted. There are big discrepancies in the preparation for the selection process and the level of confidence of being admitted between students who are not French German by birth and those with double nationality. Typically, students with two nationalities show higher levels of confidence than single citizenship students, who go through the selection process with limited expectations of success:

"I knew my level of German was sufficient, my grades were sufficient, and I had no real doubt that I would be admitted or not" Romy

"I applied but in fact I had limited hope to enter" Claudia

To counterbalance what they seem to consider as a disadvantage compared to French German born students, other students tend to invest more time and efforts in the preparation of the entrance examination.

"Before taking the entrance exam, I had been in a family in Luneburg to improve my German and put it on my resume, to prove my interest for Germany. I had bet a lot" François

This creates a feeling of unfair competition towards French German born students among the rest of the applicants. The risk of not being admitted leads to some bitter comments on behalf of those who consider they have to make more efforts to enter the programme:

"Often, I don't see why one should need to go to Germany only because his great grand-parent was German. On the contrary, I think it is a strength to be purely French and be attracted by Germany". Corinne

At the same time, French German born students recognised that the programme may be more beneficial for students with only one cultural background:

"I think it is more interesting for French students who speak German well or even not too well, than for French German students because they will get more out of it than we will" Catherine

"I will insist that one can enter the programme even if not French or French German, what is important is to show that one is motivated" Lucie

In the admission procedure, some comments stress the lack of clarity in the selection criteria, which can lead to a feeling of injustice for those placed on the waiting list:

"I did not understand at all because German was only his second foreign language, he had never been to Germany ...for me, at that time, it was totally unfair" Arthur

Comments show that students do not totally understand the criteria used in the selection process and question their weighting. Some assume that the most important criterion is language fluency, while others regard motivation as the most important criteria. This seemed to be especially true on ESCE side where applicants have already spent a semester together before applying and are thus able to assess the level of their competitors. The risk is limited on HWR side as applicants do not know each other when they apply and thus cannot compare their respective strengths or weaknesses.

Clearly, the selection process affects students' motivation and many different feelings interfere during the application phase. The interviews conducted for the selection and the waiting for the admission decision generate a level of stress that appears to be proportionate to the level of motivation for the programme, the personal investment in the preparation of the interview, the absence of alternative plan, the awareness of one's own situation in comparison with competitors and the level of student confidence.

"When you wait for the decision, you go through the interview again, you don't sleep for a while because it's preying on your mind" François

"I was really worried and I was thinking of totally changing my orientation" Arthur

"I spoke a lot, I was very nervous and I was also afraid, it was the first time I had this kind of interview" Lucie

As a logical response to the stress experienced during the selection process, the admission decision is received by students as a relief, a joy, a chance and an opportunity. The joy is all the more important as the applicant was not fully confident to be admitted.

"There are 3 or 4 big news that I really enjoyed in my life, when I got my driving licence, when I was admitted to the FGP..." François

"My mother said "let's have some champagne"!" Arthur

"It was like a gift I had never hoped for, such a chance to be able to enter this programme" Hans

"I was so happy because I did not know what to do otherwise. I absolutely wanted to enter the programme and the other options were plan B, C or D" Lucie

One can claim that the selection procedure creates a very strong emotional bond between students and the programme, and probably also among successful applicants who feel that they have been through the same difficult process. Many comments suggest that the selection procedure has a positive effect on the quality reputation of the programme, but also on the profile of students registered on the programme and on their motivation. One can imagine that the challenge of overcoming the selection procedure obliges students to a much greater level of reflexivity concerning the choice of their study path and that this reflexivity in turn brings about a higher level of motivation for the programme, reaching in some cases a sense of pride and responsibility towards the programme itself:

"I find this programme to be rewarding" Corinne

"Since I was admitted, I had this image of the French student who succeeded in France and who goes to Germany to succeed there as well" Henri

"I was proud to be among the 12 selected students" Bruno

"There was also this notion to have the exclusive opportunity that not everyone has to enter the programme" Bruno

This last comment clearly shows the emotional bond created through the selection procedure and suggests that students integrate a sense of responsibility to be up to the standard of the programme because they were offered the chance to take part in it.

The selection also creates the notion of student group sharing common characteristics:

“When there is selection, it’s obvious that one will look for a certain type of students. Since the interview checks the motivation and the grades, it’s clear that we will be more serious” Henri

“As it is a small group, it’s hard to get in of course but after, I can only see advantages” Christine

“We were told that we were more hard-working students, more motivated to work well and to learn on our own, able to get good grades and work well” Romy

It works as if the selection process managed to build from scratch a new community of students, unified around shared values and distinct from the other students because of the same shared values. The selection can be compared to a ritual that provides access to a different level of studies, perceived as of better value, as well as a sort of checkpoint that students have to cross to enter the programme, a checkpoint which in turn enhances their own motivation for the programme.

“The fact that we were chosen, that we had to fill in all the necessary forms to enter the programme, it means that a choice was made and that our level is rather high, and above all, that our motivation to keep interested and to work well is rather high” Bruno

“The programme selects students; it is natural that selected students be very competent and very ambitious too” Claudia

In the end, the selection seems to feed the motivation of students in that being selected comforts them in their choice of the study programme. Not only have they applied for the study path of their choice, they have also been chosen by the selection committee, which shows that they were “made” for the programme and confirms their initial choice of orientation. This emotional bond seems to survive until the end of the programme and this explain why all interviewed students say they would agree to promote the programme to potential students.

“Definitely, I am 1000% convinced that this programme is a unique study path” Hans

The Table 4-1 summarises students' perception of the selection procedure and its impact on motivation:

Impact of selection procedure on motivation	Selection perceived as a challenge but also an opportunity to test applicant's motivation
	Emotional bond created by the selection procedure (stress of the interview, delay for confirmation, etc.)
	Feeling that admitted students share similar characteristics and motivation levels
	Selection enhances student motivation because students feel they have been chosen
	Selection improves the image of the programme

Table 4-1 : impact of selection procedure on motivation

It is unquestionable that the higher level of selection vests the programme with a better quality image and that it creates positive group dynamics. However, there are less positive aspects concerning the selection process which will need to be investigated, such as the lack of clarity in the selection criteria, the feeling of unfair competition experienced by single citizenship students and the fact that the programme may well miss potentially good applicants, who turn away from the programme because they feel the competition is too high.

4.4.2 The expatriation period

A large majority of students did not show much concern for the requirement to move to the partner country. Again, they seemed confident to overcome the potential difficulties related to the expatriation period because most of them had already experienced moving to a different country, whether with their family or with their school. Most of them referred to this prior expatriation experience to explain the lack of concern for the mobility requirement of the programme.

“When I was young, my father was an expat in French Polynesia and I lived there for 3 years. Thus, going somewhere for 2 or 3 years never really worried me” François

“Since I have already lived one year abroad, I was quiet about going to Paris” Hans

However, some students expressed concern for leaving the relative comfort of the family setting to move to a different environment where they would live on their own. This shift to a more independent life was a source of worries for some students, especially female students (which does not mean that male students did not feel the same, they probably felt more ashamed of expressing this feeling openly):

"I ask myself if I will manage to live on my own, I still live with my parents" Corinne

"Even if I am French German, it will be different to live all alone without the family surrounding me" Christine

This worry was tempered by the prospect of living a new life and making new contacts and friends. Basically, students realised that they would have to make efforts but they considered that these would be worthwhile as they would increase their autonomy and maturity, and enable them to make new friends. They experienced contradictory feelings and their desire for security seemed to be exceeded by their desire for discovery and autonomy.

"We think it will be difficult to go far away from our family but after, I think I gained more maturity and after all, it can only be beneficial, we will make new friends" Henri

"That worries me a little but at the same time, I feel like discovering what it is" Christine

In line with their becoming more autonomous, students were also concerned with some logistical or administrative issues related to the expatriation periods, particularly housing, especially in Paris. This concern was mostly expressed by HWR students and there is a general opinion that finding housing is much easier in Berlin than in Paris.

"Berlin did not frighten me at all; I knew it was rather simple to share a flat in Berlin. In Germany, it works very easily. In France, I felt it was not so easy to find a shared flat" Catherine

HWR students seemed to be particularly sensitive to the question of housing in Paris. Their comments illustrate the stress generated by the search for accommodation in Paris.

"Housing, I did not know how to do, I had one month left to find a room or a flat. I did not know how to deal with that" Christine

"We are a little lost because we still don't have any flat and I know it will be uneasy to find one" Lucie

"Spending one year in Berlin, a year in Paris, then come back to Berlin, financially speaking..., and find housing on our own, it's not that simple" Christine

It is the case that HWR students have to move more frequently than ESCE students because of the design of the programme. Considering accommodation in Paris is more difficult to find and more expensive than in Berlin, it seems natural that housing appears as one of the major practical issues and concerns experienced by HWR students.

Students entering the programme will physically leave their family and friends but this separation was not perceived as a major concern in the age of new technologies.

"Today, not having your entourage at hand is not having Wi-Fi, which is relatively rare." Véronique

"The relationship I have with my friends does not suffer from the distance, today I use Facebook or other multimedia tools and we keep the contact rather easily" Arthur

Nevertheless, most students felt the need to talk to their friends and explain their choice before entering the programme. If their friends were sad about the physical separation, they seemed to understand and support the choice of the programme. They also provided moral support and encouragements whenever students showed lack of confidence in their ability to succeed. The moral support of their friends seems to be quite meaningful to students and it comforts them in their choice of the programme.

"My best friend and my friend also told me: you will make it" Lucie

"I am afraid of not succeeding (...) when I asked them, they said I was able to succeed" Corinne

"They were happy for me because they knew I would flourish there" Henri

Clearly, most of the concerns related to the expatriation period were counterbalanced by control beliefs. Moving to another country would not be such a complex task since most students have already experienced international mobility. Leaving their family and friends would not represent such a difficult separation as new technological tools will enable students to keep communicating freely with their relatives. Besides, friends did support

students in their endeavour to discover a new environment which they feel is perfectly fit for them. The only aspect which remained a preoccupation or a challenge was housing, particularly for German students in Paris.

4.4.3 Foreign language

Logically, German students and French students were more concerned with their level of language in the partner country than dual citizenship students. Though they know that their level is quite high, they are worried about the use of the language in an academic context, where students have to attend classes, write essays and exams, or write a Bachelor thesis. Single citizenship students tend to compare themselves with dual citizens who have a natural advantage over them in their mastery of the language.

“I was just a little worried. I knew some students were bilingual and I am not bilingual” Claudia

This concern was not systematic among single citizenship students as some were aware of their limitations but believed that they would somehow manage.

“I will not know everything when I leave, I will still have words to learn but I do not worry more than that” Henri

“I do not worry too much because I understand everything, I cannot say everything but when I am sitting at an exam, miraculously, words come easily” Véronique

Students were more worried with using the foreign language in a professional context than in an academic setting. They probably expect academics to be more understanding towards students than company tutors towards trainees. This concern was shared by HWR and ESCE students alike as they all have to do a six-month in-company placement in the partner country.

“Linguistic aspects are important in this programme as we need to sell ourselves in France in order to find a placement for instance” Hans

“Linguistically, something I worried a lot about was my placement at Bosch. I thought this is a big company, will it be a problem?” Susan

Some dual citizenship students also showed some level of concern for their language skills, especially in the use of technical terms which they may not know. A French German born student said:

“Before going to Paris, I was worried about having the right level to follow classes in French, to understand everything, above all the vocabulary when it is a little technical” Bruno

Another French German born student added:

“I was a little nervous after two weeks of intensive classes, everyone completely panicked because we did a lot of economic French” Lucie

However, for those who expressed concern for their level in the foreign language, a couple of control beliefs were formulated which tempered the criticality of the situation: time and being in a group with bilingual students. As regards time, students understand that the programme lasts for 5 years and that they are not necessarily expected to start the programme with a perfect mastery of the foreign language, as expressed below:

“It’s only the fear to think that we need to start the first semester with a perfect French and perfect notions of economic French, when this is what we will be doing for 5 years” Lucie

The cohabitation with bilingual students is perceived positively by students who show concern for their own language level because they believe that they will improve their level more rapidly in an environment shared with students who are fluent in the language.

“At first, it was a concern and after, I said to myself that one always learn with people who are better” Claudia

Here again, it could be claimed that the concern for language level is balanced by two control beliefs: the classroom environment will allow students to improve their level rapidly and they have time to reach a sufficient level to be accepted as a trainee in a company.

4.4.4 Academic concerns and coordination between the two institutions

When they apply for the programme, students are not worried with the academic aspects of the French German course. Apart from language issues already discussed, first year students

did not make any particular comment concerning the content of the subjects to be studied at the partner institution, neither did they about the mandatory six-month in-company placement in the partner country. Apparently, this is not the kind of questions which they focus on at the moment of their application. The only feeling expressed by a HWR first year student is that students are well supervised during the study abroad period and that this impression positively influenced the decision to apply:

“What also pushed me a little is the fact that when we are in Paris, we are constantly supervised” Christine

Some later year students very well describe this lack of academic concern by explaining that at that time, they were not well informed of what was expecting them:

“I don’t remember having any real concern at that time; we were not yet completely informed of what was expecting us” Romy

Logically, academic or organisational concerns are more frequent with students who have already been on the programme for some time, who have experienced the programme and the expatriation period, and who are thus more inclined to provide some personal experience feedback.

On the positive side, some ESCE students recognised that the internship, even if stressful at times, was a confidence building experience which prepared them well for their studies at HWR:

“I was extremely stressed, it was terrible. I learnt a lot on the business world in general but also the fact that I had to believe in myself. ... I greatly improved my level of confidence regarding the German language” Susan

Besides, HWR students appreciate the availability of administrative and academic staff both at HWR and ESCE. They like having dedicated people in both schools to look after their own group and answer their questions effectively. This feeling of having an “exclusive” supervision is all the stronger as other HWR or ESCE students registered on other programmes have to deal with a centralised academic office for hundreds of students.

“Being a small group of students has a lot of advantages, people take care of us, there is a personal contact with professors, the administration” Margarete

On the negative side however, students also expressed criticism regarding the programme coordination and emphasised the limits of the supervision. First, student follow-up by the home institution is not considered as effective when students are studying at the partner school:

“We left ESCE a year ago and did not get a student ID. I had a resit and nobody gave me the hand-outs for the exam. It was a little out of sight out of mind” Catherine

Looking backwards, HWR students feel they could have been provided with more information on housing and living costs before they joined the programme: students stress the lack of support on housing and the lack of information about living costs in France in general. They would have liked to be more aware of the possible grants to organise their stay in France.

ESCE and HWR students feel they could have been better informed on the course content of the different Master specialisation within the programme. Some HWR students seemed concerned with the coordination of course contents between the two institutions, the redundancy between some subjects taught at HWR and ESCE, or the knowledge gap which can happen as a result of the joint design of the programme. ESCE students made no mention of such concern but stressed that the coordination and information to students could be improved.

Comments show that students are eager to express their views on the programme in order to improve its coordination and benefit from a learning curve but overall, the satisfaction level is very high and academic concerns in comparison rather limited.

“Some aspects need to be improved; some small aspects in the administration and the information flows but the idea of the programme and the great majority of its implementation are very good” Margarete

In any case, the analysis shows that applicants did not rank academic issues high on their list of concerns and that they had no idea about the possible difficulties in relation to the coordination of the programme when they applied.

4.4.5 Financial concerns

The financial concerns refer to the tuition fees and the costs of living, particularly during the expatriation period. Before proceeding with the analysis, it is necessary to explain a major difference between ESCE and HWR students regarding tuition fees. Both institutions have evolved in their national environment and depend on the regulations set by national educational authorities. ESCE is a private institution almost exclusively funded by tuition fees, as most of the business schools are in France, while public universities charge very limited fees to students and receive their operational budget from the Ministry of Education. As a consequence, ESCE students pay approximately 10.000€ per year for 5 years in tuition fees. HWR is a publicly funded institution and as such, the level of tuition fees is decided at central level by the regional educational authorities. Therefore, students who register with HWR pay around 200€ per semester. The FGP is a collaborative programme between a private and a public institution that cannot change their legal environment and students who enrol on the programme end up paying different levels of fees, depending on the institution where they are registered.

Given this huge difference in the financial context, one could expect ESCE students to be extremely concerned with the payment of tuition fees. The analysis does not reflect any such feeling: most ESCE students seem to have internalised the fact that studying business in France has a cost and that this cost will be borne by their parents. A majority of ESCE students even declared that tuition fees were neither a barrier, nor a criterion for them to enter the programme.

“My parents told me not to bother; they totally avoided the point and told me it wasn’t important at all for my studies” Catherine

“I am lucky enough to have parents who told me that if I wanted to attend a business school, they would pay for it” François

“The financial aspect was not a barrier to the choice of the programme” Corinne

“I did not consider at all the costs” Susan

“My parents have less financial difficulties because both are engineers and can afford it” Véronique

It does not mean that ESCE students are not aware of the financial aspects of the programme. It rather means that parents and students assume it is the responsibility of parents to pay for their children's higher education. This may also explain why only one ESCE student confessed some frustration at the huge inequality in the level of fees charged for the same programme between an ESCE and a HWR student. It would be interesting to know whether parents of ESCE students are also aware of the difference in fee levels.

In comparison, HWR students are aware of the advantage to be registered with HWR and pay very low tuition fees but they are very concerned with the costs of living in Paris during their expatriation period.

"In Germany, it's not too difficult because we pay more or less 200€ per semester and we have time to have a job" Lucie

Their comments tend to show that they feel the expenses associated to the study period in Paris are their responsibility, rather than their parents'.

"All the students told me that for them; the greatest concern was the expatriation year and how they could finance this year abroad" Hans

It is clearly a source of preoccupation for them and they look for solutions on their own, even if some of them know that their parents will support them financially if needed.

"For me, I was not clear I could spend two years in Paris without finding financial support" Hans

"The financial aid from the FGU pushed me a little to do the programme" Christine

The attitude of HWR students concerning living costs seems to illustrate a stronger sensitivity to studying and living costs than ESCE students. Many referred to the scholarships provided by the FGU and the Erasmus programme as a real financial support, while ESCE students did not seem to pay a great deal of attention to them:

"I saw the programme was supporting us and providing money for us to be able to live in Paris and I thought it was very good because it's not that easy" Claudia (HWR student)

"I knew we would get a 200€ scholarship per month but it was not a real issue for me"
Susan (ESCE student)

Obviously, there are real differences in costs of living between Paris and Berlin which can also explain the apparent lack of interest of ESCE students for scholarships. But comments still show a big difference in attitude between ESCE and HWR students with regards to financial aspects of the programme: it is a source of worries for HWR students who try to overcome the problem by looking for student jobs, by looking for additional student grants and who are more sensitive to the scholarships provided by the FGU and Erasmus programme.

For most of the concerns identified, students have either developed strategies to cope with the issues or made comments suggesting a number of control beliefs, which reduce the perception of risk associated to the programme. At a more general level, it should be stressed that interviewed students have shown in their majority a very high level of confidence in their capacity to adjust to the foreign environment and in their ability to complete the programme successfully.

"At the beginning, it will be tough, we need to adapt to the culture but I am aware of that and I think I will manage" Corinne

"I said to myself: if we stick to it and if we really want to do it, we can make it"
Christine

This level of confidence seems to be based on the belief that efforts, motivation and dedication will enable to achieve high goals. This personality trait is extremely effective in relativizing the risks which students anticipate for the programme and naturally pushes them to focus on the expected rewards rather than potential pitfalls.

4.4.6 Conclusion

The selection procedure is by far the major source of concern for FG students, as illustrated by the high number of occurrences in table 3-3 (p.51). The ambivalent nature of the selection procedure is highlighted by students who claim that it may deter some potentially good applicants to apply, but at the same time acknowledge that once overcome, the

selection procedure creates an emotional bond with the programme and fosters motivation. In addition, we have identified other categories of concerns in relation to the expatriation period, the mastery of the foreign language and the ability to cope with the financial aspects of the programme. The findings suggest that students have developed a number of control beliefs which tend to reduce the overall level of concern for the programme.

4.5 Theme 4: Behavioural beliefs

4.5.1 Benefits of cultural diversity and international immersion programmes

The first belief shared by students is the firm conviction that becoming accustomed to other cultures and people from other cultural backgrounds is a necessity in today's world. The ability to understand other cultures, to be familiar with cross-cultural communication, to be willing to confront ideas and behaviours, is positively valued.

"Today, with everything that happens, the globalisation and all, we have to be extremely mobile as students; today it is a real positive aspect to see different countries surrounding us, different cultures" Henri

Students consider that having cross-cultural skills and being mobile are required in order to understand today's world and its complexity. They believe that this is especially true in the context of Europe where many different cultures coexist and where work mobility is promoted across borders in line with the notion of free circulation of people.

"I think we need to support this idea, strengthen the cross-cultural links and promote exchanges because it is a great asset. Europe is something very special as on a small surface, we have a huge cultural diversity. I think living in Europe is fantastic." Margarete

"It is the European notion of being able to work throughout Europe or even abroad" Bruno

Contacts with foreign people are considered as a discovery because students will get to know the other culture in depth but also as a personal learning process which will oblige them to get out of their comfort zone and become more aware of their own cultural traits.

"What also matters is to meet other cultures, to see how another educational system works and I think this is shared by most people on the programme" Catherine

This discovery is seen as more fun as well as more interesting than communicating with people from one's own culture.

"I prefer to meet a lot of foreign people to have a much better time" "It's good to see other ways of working, other people" François

"I wanted to discover something else, I moved several times in my life and each time, it was self-enriching" Margarete

In contrast, remaining in a national environment or with fellow countrymen is believed to restrict the ability to evolve and develop personally.

"To learn, to stay among French in Germany had no interest" François

"If the goal is to remain among French for two years, there is no real interest" Véronique

The general view is that moving out of one's own comfort zone and personal routine will be globally beneficial and will facilitate personal growth.

"What was important to me was to get out of my routine ... and to find myself in new environments" Bruno

"Living in a foreign country for so much time, even if Germany is not so different from France, one learns a lot about oneself too" Susan

"During these 5 years, we evolve a lot from a personal standpoint, our ambitions, and our choices." Arthur

The second belief is that aiming at becoming fluent in the local language and being open-minded are necessary pre-requisite for deep cross-cultural communication. Students feel that overcoming the language barrier will enable them to see their foreign counterparts as they really are, and not as they are perceived to be. Language mastery thus becomes a weapon against misunderstanding and stock ideas about the other culture.

"There is no longer any language barrier between me and the Germans, this helped to bring down a number of clichés and to consider them as people like me" Véronique

"I realised that languages were necessary tools to overcome cross-cultural understanding. You can understand people non verbally but when you want to understand them in a deeper way, you need to understand what they say" Hans

They are also convinced that being interested in other cultures is a necessary predisposition without which there is limited opportunity for cross-cultural communication. In fact, all of them stress their strong interest in discovering other cultures and meeting new people, which seems to be a shared personality trait.

"I have always been interested in the other, in different cultures." Henri

"I am very eager to meet people, to speak, I am very open, I think it is important to participate in this kind of exchange" Véronique

"Some are not at all interested in discovering other countries, of course, there is not much I can do about it but I try to convince them of the interest of discovering other cultures" Margarete

The lack of curiosity for other cultures is seen as a mistake and students feel the need to defend the idea of cultural diversity towards students who may not be naturally inclined to the concept.

The third belief is that total immersion in a foreign country for a long period of time is the only way to achieve full mastery of the foreign language and become skilled at cross-cultural communication. Students agree with the general statement that mobility experiences are always beneficial.

"In any case, going abroad, this kind of experiences abroad, is always an asset"
Claudia

However, they stress that complete immersion requires time in order for the person to evolve, learn and feel all the benefits of the experience.

"Living two years in a country is significant ... we really get to know the country, the language, we know the expressions which only locals really know or their cultural rituals" Susan

"It's not just for 6 months; it's a real cultural experience" Bruno

"In a year, we don't really have time to get accustomed. It's like, I pack my luggage but I know that I will be back home within a year. Two years, it's different; I think we will be able to say that we have lived in the country" Véronique

The notion of time is used to differentiate the FGP, seen as a deep cross-cultural experience, from shorter Erasmus exchange programmes which would not meet the same objectives and could only bring superficial changes. There is the underlying belief that a real life-changing experience requires time:

"I saw there were Erasmus exchanges but I thought that six months was almost too short" Corinne

"We feel like real Berliners, unlike Erasmus students who stay a few months and then leave" Romy

The six-month company placement in the partner country represents a practical experience which students consider particularly important for their future career. They believe that the internship will help them to choose their specialisation track and to better define their professional career plan:

"I would advise everyone to do a placement, ... to work in the job or in the field where they would like to work after graduation, to discover if this is really the good choice" Margarete

"I think the placements will influence the field in which I would like to specialise" Lucie

They also consider that the placement will enhance their employability because to their view, it is highly valued by employers.

"They do not know the content of the programme and for them, it's more important to have professional experiences next to studies" Hans

The fourth belief is that immersion will vest students with soft skills which are seen as essential in the building of one's own cultural and social capital.

"All the things I learned in Paris, especially in the cross-cultural field, is something very rich and very valued but it cannot be compared to something tangible" Hans

Immersion is supposed to develop self-awareness concerning one's own cultural features and personality, self-critical ability and capacity for critical thinking with regard to mainstream opinions, as the following statement shows:

"I am not chauvinistic, trying to defend my culture; I accept that there are mistakes and that not everything is perfect in France" François

"We learn a lot about ourselves too" Susan

Long-term immersion is also expected to increase the feeling of independence and autonomy, which are inherent to the development of the self. Personal growth and maturity are believed to be facilitated by moving away from one's cultural environment for a long period of time.

"Compared to students who would only have studied in France, we learn to become more independent and to grow regarding our vision of work" Romy

Cultural immersion is also perceived as increasing the capacity to be flexible and to adapt to a different environment, to enhance tolerance, open-mindedness, and the confidence in the capacity to move to another country by introducing a true culture of mobility.

"I learned a lot and I grew up with the responsibilities and expectations in term of flexibility" Margarete

"Studying with people from another culture makes us more open-minded and tolerant" Susan

"We have gotten used to packing our luggage in less than two hours. Our mobility is a great asset and we do not fear going abroad to do internships or study" Hans

FG students are well aware of the implications of globalisation for their own future and share the belief that the long-term immersion experience provided by the FGP will enable them to grow individually and acquire skills which they consider as essential in today's competitive world.

4.5.2 Beliefs on Double degrees and employability

Students share behavioural beliefs concerning double degrees and their supposed benefits. Only one student declared that the double qualification was not a major criterion in the

decision to apply. This comment was based on the assumption that the recognition of foreign degrees in EU countries is already quite automatic, thus diminishing the need for a double degree.

"I would have totally agreed with one single degree. Maybe I am wrong but I think Europe is already enough developed to recognise the degrees of neighbour countries"
Margarete

All other students felt that the double degree is an interesting option offering a number of advantages, compared to other study paths. These beliefs can be described as follows:

- Double degrees represent a unique opportunity and a means for students to differentiate:

"I would end up with a Bachelor and two masters, what the other programmes did not necessarily offer" Catherine

"Being able to say that in 5 years, I would have finished my studies with two degrees, this looked unique for a student in Germany" Hans

"To have a degree valid and recognised in both countries would be something that not everybody has the opportunity to get, something unique" Bruno

- Double degrees provide official recognition for the efforts made by students and represent a proof of their seriousness and capacity:

"It's a Degree for the efforts we made which is important" Susan

"It's an important recognition of all the work we have done." Véronique

"The ambition, the seriousness, the determination ... above all the ambition, I think it shows that we want to do something French and German at the same time." Romy

Indeed, students seem to consider that double degrees officialise a number of skills which distinguish them from other students. For instance, it is the proof that they successfully attended regular courses in the partner country, that they managed two academic systems and acquired advanced knowledge of both national economic environments. It also shows they have the necessary adaptation skills, open-mindedness and language skills to perform in both countries efficiently. For these

reasons, they feel that the concept of double degree itself will have an impact on the way their student profile is perceived:

"A double degree, it shows a personality" Lucie

"When you obtain a Degree, it means that you have really worked ... I hope and I think employers will perceive it that way" Bruno

This recognition participates in the differentiation versus other international mobility programmes, such as regular Erasmus exchanges which have become very frequent and are not associated with the same image as double degrees:

"To have a double degree, the real two degrees from two countries, is indeed more recognised than a simple Erasmus exchange" Bruno

- French German Double degrees increase the geographic scope of employability and offer graduates the opportunity to choose to start their career in either country.

"It's an advantage because it enables to work in France as much as in Germany" Véronique

"This programme opens doors in France because I heard that it is difficult to find a job without a French Degree, then the French Degree will be an advantage" Lucie

Students believe in their vast majority that a double degree will enhance their career prospects and employability. This belief aggregates all the previous beliefs concerning double degrees and is well anchored in the mind of students:

"Yes, I am convinced that this is an advantage on the job market" Bruno

However, one student remained aware that opinions concerning double degrees are beliefs and that he will be able to see whether these beliefs are confirmed only once the programme is completed:

"I could not imagine what advantage a double degree could have and even now, I am not able to imagine what my real competitive advantages are. I think this will come in due course. I do not know the impact this will have on the first job applications I will send" Hans

To summarise, most FG students see the double degree path as a means to enhance their employability, enlarge the geographic scope of their career, provide official recognition for their efforts and eventually enable them to differentiate.

4.5.3 The FGP prepares for global professional opportunities

Most interviewed students believe that, in spite of its focus on France and Germany, the programme is a good preparation for more global careers. Students do not want to be labelled as “only” French German and they consider that the skills and competences promoted by the programme will enable them to work in any international setting, beyond the geographic scope of the French and German labour market.

“It’s a degree with an international recognition and this won’t prevent me from working in a third country” Corinne

“I want to start my career in Germany but if I can work for two years as an expat or not in New York or South America, I would totally go for it” François

“I found that the best asset of the programme is its international dimension” Hans

However, there is an underlying belief that an experience in a third country would fit very nicely with their curriculum. Some students feel there is a risk to be considered as too specialised in the French German business environment and some would like to experience a third country during the programme or after graduation, in order to increase the global image of their profile.

“I would not like to be cooped up in the French German, even if I have a lot of experience in the field; this is not what interests me more. It’s the international and not to be holed up in our two small countries” Arthur

One student even considered the programme to be a disadvantage for those who wish to work outside of France and Germany but she was the only one to express this opinion which is not representative of the sample:

“We know that the degree is very useful to work in France and Germany but it is especially for France and Germany that it is interesting. If we were interested in other

countries, I think this would be a disadvantage. It is very focused on France and Germany". Romy

Students are aware of the risk of being catalogued as only French German and they pay great attention to the role of the English language in the FGP. Being fluent in English is a requirement in students' minds for an international career and they cannot think of a French German degree which would lack a strong English dimension. They all take it for granted that a programme preparing for international careers cannot only focus on French and German languages and needs to offer opportunities to practice English. Their ultimate goal is to become fluent in three languages, English, French and German and they expect the FGP to provide this opportunity:

"I had read that in Paris all subjects were in French but then I spoke to the student who presented the programme and she had done subjects in English too. So, I liked it even more because I did not want to focus only on French" Christine

"I like it that English has a great importance, we don't miss the target, it's not only German studies but real international studies" Corinne

Not only English is seen as a must for international business but it is also the working language in many big corporations, even in companies emblematic of the French German environment.

"In my company Airbus, there are many trainees but almost none of them speaks German. Communication is only in English. With my German boss, we only speak English" François

Students develop or have developed strategies which will enable them to complete the programme being fluent in three languages. Some have spent an entire year in an English speaking country before applying; some make sure that they take advantage of all the opportunities offered by the programme to speak English and improve their level. The relationship towards the English language could be assimilated to a concern and the strategies developed by students could be compared to control beliefs which cover the risk of being considered as purely French German rather than truly international. However, in spite of this concern, students in their vast majority consider the programme as more open than limited to a restricted French German environment because of the opportunities offered:

"The fact that we have subjects taught in English, that we can choose other foreign languages, that we meet other students, that we analyse international case studies in class from companies all over the world, I think it is a very important aspect." Margarete

Students also believe that the programme will provide them with valuable cross-cultural skills. Together with language skills, they seem to consider cross-cultural communication as a key competence for an international career. They see the programme as a good way to acquire the capacity to question one's own culture, to develop tolerance and respect for other cultures, to get rid of a number of clichés, to adapt one's way of working and to become more flexible. All these skills are associated to the notion of cross-cultural communication and students feel that combined with the mastery of three languages, these competences are critical assets of the programme.

"I think a French German student has proven its languages skills first, and after its cross-cultural ability too." Christine

Reassured concerning the role of English in the programme and convinced that the programme will provide them with valuable cross-cultural competences, most students develop the strong belief that the programme will prepare them for global international careers:

"It enables to broaden the horizon further than the French German scope" Margarete

They believe that the programme will be a professional springboard and feel that it will have a positive influence on their employability and future careers.

"It's a springboard in a professional career" Corinne

"In any case, this will be richness, no matter where I apply" Romy

"I am convinced that this programme and this profile I am creating will have a great influence on the positions for which I will apply." Hans

A large majority of interviewed students consider that the FGP prepares them for global careers, not limited to France and Germany, and will impact their professional development. However, some identify the risk of being perceived as over-specialised in the French German

context and they insist on the need to maintain English as a central component of the programme.

4.5.4 Conclusion

The use of the Theory of Planned Behaviour enabled to identify a number of behavioural beliefs, shared by French German students. Looking at the number of occurrences in table 3-3 (p.51), we can concentrate on the main beliefs underlying students' behaviours. First on the list is the firm conviction that a long-term immersion period in the partner country will be a life-changing experience, generating personal growth and enabling students to acquire specific skills, such as self-awareness, ability for critical thinking, deep cultural understanding, language mastery, independence and maturity. Students consider these skills as essential to compete on a global marketplace. Regarding double degrees, most students share the belief that the double qualification will represent an official recognition for their efforts and will enhance the geographic scope of their employability. They expect the double degree to positively affect the perception of their profile by potential employers and to enable them to differentiate on a competitive market. Finally, they consider that the FGP offers a complete preparation for global professional careers, as long as it is not over-specialised in the French German context and keeps English as a critical component of the programme.

4.6 Theme 5: Student motivations and choice criteria

Now that I have described the composition of the sample and some common features of student personalities, influences, concerns and behavioural beliefs, I will continue with the analysis of the main factors motivating students to apply.

4.6.1 A programme choice coherent with prior experience and personalities

When asked about their choice of the FGP, all students immediately refer to their prior experiences and insist on the logical dimension of their choice, in continuity with their educational background or their identity.

However, there are slight differences between the single citizenship students and the French German students. Students who are not born French German explain in greater details the process which has led them to apply for the programme: typically, they first mention their encounter with the foreign language, then they refer to a mobility programme which enabled them to make friends and experience the partner country and eventually led them to consider the FGP as a coherent choice in line with their own interests and passions. Some already made the choice of a French German education in their secondary school years in which case, the choice of the FGP was all the more natural:

“Every time I went to Germany, I had a great experience and if I am admitted, I hope it will be the same” Henri

“I had the asset of the German language, I had been to Germany several times and always enjoyed it very much” François

“I lived in France for a year when I was 16 and I liked the French language” Claudia

“As I had had a French German educational background, I thought why not continue”
Arthur

Students who were born French German are more straightforward in their answer and some of them even seem to consider the question useless.

“For us, it was simply the continuity of our studies” Romy

“I was in a French German school, I passed the Baccalaureate and the Habitur, and here I am” Christine

“My friends told me that I was perfectly fit for the programme, as I am French German and I speak English” Lucie

However, French German born students still understand that the programme is not only suited for French German naturals. They consider their choice as obvious and natural, but they see that the programme is also an opportunity for students with a different family background.

“There are lots of French Germans who apply because they think that the programme is made for them. But as Mrs...told us, we always look for German only students in the programme” Lucie

Similarly, single citizenship students see the choice of French German born students as more logical compared to theirs:

“For the others, it was much more logical to do a FGP than for me” Hans

The group is aware of the coexistence of two categories of students, those who are French German by birth, for whom the choice of the programme is natural, and those who are French German by choice, for whom the choice is coherent with their experiences and personalities. In both cases, students feel that they have a vocation for the programme.

4.6.2 Choice of a programme rather than choice of an institution

In line with the strong individual connection towards the programme, the findings suggest that FG students have made the choice of an academic programme, rather than the choice of an institution. A clear majority of ESCE and HWR students declared that they chose the FGP before choosing the institution where the programme was delivered. Belonging to the French German community was one key component of the choice. Only one student applied to ESCE without being aware of the programme. My research shows that the choice of the FGP has a strong psychological component and that some students feel they have a real predisposition for the programme, before considering other more rational aspects in relation to the programme and before being influenced by their perceived quality of the institution. The prevalence of programme choice over institutional choice and its implications for course leaders will be further detailed in the discussion chapter.

4.6.3 Long-term career goals

As one of the students put it:

“There are two types of expectations in the choice of a study path, will this type of programme be suitable for my personality? And will it lead me where I want to get in the end?” Véronique

The two components coexist in the discourse of students who combine in their choice psychological aspects with more instrumental preoccupations. Even if their career goals are

sometimes fuzzy, all students verbalise that their choice is conditioned by their professional expectations which they consider to be quite ambitious:

“Everyone knows that they want to achieve something big but many do not know yet what it will be” Lucie

With two exceptions, students described their career goals in very broad and general terms: they wish to make the most of the programme to work in an international environment, possibly between France and Germany, but also in other areas of the globe and they believe that the programme will progressively help them to refine their professional goals and achieve them. Most students insisted on the economic role played by the French German relationship and implicitly suggested that the programme will “surf” on the strong economic and business ties between the two European powers. The vocational orientation of students is shared among all students who see the programme as instrumental to a long-term goal, even if this goal is still to be defined.

ESCE students seemed particularly keen to work in Germany or with Germany, compared to HWR students who did not explicitly state France as a possible job destination. ESCE students have a strategic approach: they are well aware of the lack of graduates with a French German profile and of the opportunities of the German job market. One student even declared that he had planned his career in Germany at the time he chose German as a foreign language together with his parents. The economic strength of the German market is a recurrent theme among ESCE students which is well summarised by the following comment:

“If Germany had been declining economically, I don’t know if I would have chosen a FGP” François

Long-term goals are closely related to professional opportunities and some students seem to have strategically assessed the potential of the programme for their career. Aspects such as the economic strength of Germany, if not mentioned systematically, may illustrate the influence of the larger economic context on student choices. This will be further discussed in the following chapter.

4.6.4 Short-term programme expectations

Students also choose the programme for more immediate benefits related to the learning experience provided. First on the list comes the opportunity to experience life in the partner country for a long duration. Students make a clear difference between short trips taken to the partner country, which most of them have already done, and the opportunity to really live as a local for two years.

“I’ve been to France often for holidays but I still felt like living there and spending more time in France” Bruno

“I’ve been to Paris and Berlin but it is something different to discover the daily life in both cities” Catherine

This motivation goes beyond the opportunity of being a student in the partner country; it is seen as an integrated experience which includes the academic experience, the work experience through the six-month placement and the personal experience of daily life. Students realise that they will have to adopt different roles and expect the combination of these roles to be beneficial: the role of student, the role of trainee during the internship and the role of a local discovering the surrounding cultural environment. Paris and Berlin are considered by students as vibrant cultural cities which will help them to understand the cultural dimension of the partner country in all its complexity.

“Yes, Berlin, it was the language, the culture, the exchange, the cultural exchange, another city, a major city, two major cities!” Margarete

The in-depth cultural discovery of the other country is a strong determinant for their choice of the programme. Obviously, the mastery of the language is the first expected outcome of the experience:

“To speak German and understand the culture, there is nothing better than being in a class with Germans” François

And interestingly, even students who are born French German share this expectation concerning their language skills:

“I speak French, this is true, but I could always improve my French” Lucie

This could sound surprising on behalf of individuals who are already fluent in both French and German but this category of students also feels that the programme has something to offer language-wise, culturally, and even more deeply:

"I wanted to rediscover my French side" Lucie

This quote suggests that some motivations are very intimate for binational students and carry a strong emotional component, corroborating findings expressed earlier.

The programme appears as some sort of initiatory journey which students are willing to take because they expect that it will help them to discover their inner self, especially in a situation where they will be experiencing this journey on their own, far away from their family environment.

"I will discover all of this, but alone, not with someone accompanying me and supporting me" Christine

They believe the FGP is the programme that offers the strongest benefits and they expect their lives to be changed at many levels through this experience.

"this programme offers many advantages, I mean a year and a half in Berlin, a 6-month placement in Germany ..., this is truly perfect to learn a language, to immerse oneself in the culture" François

When they apply, some students may not have been fully aware of the personal impact that the programme would have on their lives, but comments made by more advanced students strongly support the life-changing nature of the programme:

"I did not expect to grow nor to become so mature ... thanks to the programme"
Romy

"For 5 years, we evolve enormously from a personal standpoint, our ambitions, our choices change a lot." Arthur

Clearly, students expect the FGP to be a life-changing opportunity, allowing individual growth thanks to the experience of the programme itself.

4.6.5 The importance of being part of a mixed group

The structure of the group, its limited size and the balanced number of HWR and ESCE students are definitely factors motivating students to apply. Students list a number of advantages of studying within this configuration:

- The classroom environment is valued as richer and more stimulating than other regular classroom settings:

“Being in a class with Germans is very inspiring ... it’s a great richness to see how they do things” Romy

“that the group was composed of 50% French and 50% Germans attracted me a lot” Susan

- The relationships built within the group are seen as deeper and more stable, leading to group dynamics based on mutual assistance, friendship and the development of a real team spirit. In some cases, the group could be seen as a substitute for the family which students just left.

“We are a small group, we stay together, we will learn to work together, to develop a group dynamic, to pull the group up” Catherine

“We are a team rather than a group of individuals” Véronique

“The human and personal aspect is highly valued when you use it in a team” Hans

“It’s a little like a family which is going to move to Paris altogether” Lucie

- The class configuration is supposed to have a positive impact on learning both in terms of group size and group mix:

“To learn, if it was staying among French in Germany, there was no interest” François

“We constantly live in the cultures of the others, we exchange a lot, we do not have the same understanding” Véronique

- The management of the group by the two institutions and the availability of the coordinating staff were considered as additional advantages, probably due to the fact that each institution appointed a dedicated course leader for the programme.
- The belongingness to the group extends through cohorts, thus turning the perception of the group into a real French German community. Facebook communities or WhatsApp dedicated groups are created to give support to this notion of community.

But students were also able to identify a number of drawbacks in relation to the group. Several were worried concerning the oppressing aspect that a group can have on individuals. For instance, the group reduces the anonymity of students and creates responsibility towards the group. This can be felt as somewhat intrusive:

“If I do not succeed, all the 13 students would know about it and this...I don’t know”
Christine

Many of the advantages expressed concerning the notion of group rely on the well-functioning of the group and some students were concerned that if the group dynamics did not work out well, this could be complicated to handle in a programme lasting 5 years. Similarly, some students see the group as a small and rather closed network, compared to the network which students from other programmes may develop. But they balance the comment by saying that if not as extended, their network will be more solid.

4.6.6 Combined benefits of two academic systems

Students express interest and curiosity for the comparison between the two academic systems which they will experience during the programme. Most students have already been in contact with the educational approach of both countries, usually during school years. This enabled them to develop some awareness of the differences between the two systems. However, they expect higher education systems to be different from secondary education and feel eager to discover it:

“I was very eager to see how the German higher education system worked” Arthur

"I know that the school approach is very different. I haven't experienced it yet but it's a kind of expectation I have for next year" Véronique

"I think it will be very interesting to see another side of the experience of studying"
Lucie

Students tend to agree in their vision of ESCE and HWR compared educational approaches and respective learning environments. The differences which they highlight affect most of the aspects of the learning experience: the logistical organisation, the way in which professors teach, the way in which students learn, the type of control exercised over students by academics. In broad terms, ESCE academic system is seen as a very "school-like" environment where the professor is mainly concerned with transferring knowledge to students, where attendance is checked by the administration, where the number of teaching hours is rather high, leaving little time for extra-curricular activities or student jobs and where periodic exams push students to adopt a study routine.

HWR academic system is described as more open, based on student active participation, discussions and debates, offering more proximity to the lecturer than the French system, and relying on students' responsibility rather than on systematic control. The German system would help students to develop autonomously and their success would mainly depend on their own intrinsic motivational factors. As a result, this learning environment can be considered as more "risky":

"Since there is no continuous assessment, it is easier to fail at an exam" Christine

The French approach would provide a "safer" learning environment, with elements of extrinsic motivation imposed by the educational setting (such as attendance check and continuous assessment) but would offer less flexibility, less freedom and less anonymity to students:

"It was somewhat easier and more systematic to learn the "French way" because there was a rhythm, there was more regularity" Romy

"Some people would prefer more freedom, more flexibility, and also more anonymity"
Margarete

Students also perceive ESCE system as elitist, compared to the German system where what matters most is the acquired experience rather than the value of the qualification.

“For us, it is much more important to have work experience than a Degree from a Grande Ecole” Hans

“There is always this very French sense of competition and elitism” Bruno

In spite of the numerous differences identified by students, it would be a caricature to describe ESCE as a learning environment mostly based on extrinsic motivation and fostering surface learning, while HWR would only rely on intrinsic motivation and foster deep learning and responsibility. Interestingly, students from both institutions have evolved towards deeper learning experiences when moving to the partner institution, even if grades remain a strong extrinsic motivation.

“After arriving at ESCE, I started to be more interested and I felt like going further and learning and having good grades” Bruno

“Here (meaning at HWR), we work in a more mature way, we question more, we are more dynamic, we consider the bigger picture” Romy

These quotes show that students are able to adapt their learning orientation in order to fit with the institutional context. It also shows that the main differences in academic approaches have raised students' own awareness concerning their learning style. Moving across two systems also seems to have raised their reflexivity and their self-awareness. Many see the opportunity to switch between two systems as a great advantage and this can be considered as another motivation to apply for the programme:

“I absolutely wanted to keep both sides and not stay with only one mentality concerning education” Romy

“Educational systems are different, that's for sure but one can adapt to different systems with a little effort” Henri

“This will enable me to compare the educational differences and to also develop my own idea of what I will have learnt” Henri

This last quote from a first year student suggests that the combination of the two academic systems is seen as facilitating the development of critical thinking and reflexivity. This is

definitely seen as an advantage compared to other traditional programme delivered in a single educational environment.

4.6.7 Recognition advantage

Another motivation for students to apply is the academic and professional recognition that the double degree provides to the programme.

Academically, students make a huge distinction between Erasmus mobility programmes and the experience they expect from the FGP. To their mind, Erasmus programmes do not last long enough to allow participants to grasp the real nature of the cultural and academic environment which they experience. French German students criticise the motivations of Erasmus students and refuse to be associated with their attitude:

“When we see the Erasmus students who went to Berlin with us, they just wanted to stay among French and to party” François

Students consider that spending two years in the partner country enables to live as locals and assimilate the cultural and academic local context much more in depth than shorter expatriation periods. Besides, the level of academic investment of the FGP is seen as much higher than for an Erasmus exchange:

“What is important for us is to be different from a semester or a year of Erasmus exchange because they have no obligation of result, it’s not the same workload that we have” Bruno

Students associate Erasmus programmes with a lack of academic content and a limited individual experience, the exact opposite of what they consider the FGP to be.

On the professional side, the double degree matters significantly because it proves that students have had a long-term French and German experience, spending a comparable time in each country. The double degree is expected to enhance the recognition of the programme, to open up new job opportunities in the partner country and to positively impact salaries.

“The two masters, this is also very important, it’s a recognition of all the work we did. In today’s job market, I think this is important” Véronique

According to the number of occurrences, ESCE students seemed to be more concerned with the double degree recognition than their HWR counterparts. In proportion, fewer HWR students insisted on the benefits of the double degree but when they did, they expressed the same opinion as ESCE students and considered that the double qualification would help them to reach better positions, but also to choose the country where they wish to start their career. In a competitive job market, the double degree adds another string to their bow and enables them to be seen as serious, hardworking, committed students who have opted for a demanding study path. This constitutes an obvious element of differentiation for their future career:

“To have a Degree recognised in Germany and in France is something that everyone is not lucky enough to have, something unique” Bruno

Once again, FG students feel that the double degree will help them to be perceived as more gifted compared to other students. They consider that the quality image of double degrees will benefit to the recognition of their own specific attributes by potential employers.

4.6.8 Motivations specific to HWR students

HWR students specifically mentioned two additional motivational factors for the FGP. The first element refers to the programme content: with one exception, only HWR students indicated that they chose the programme because of its content in international management and languages. This motivation probably also exists for ESCE students but it was not expressed during the interviews. HWR students are the only ones to explain that they had been thinking about their choice of study field before applying:

“As I had studied one year of international management in the States, I liked the subject and I knew I wanted to remain in this field” Bruno

“I was interested in economics and I wanted to evolve towards the field of management” Christine

*“After my secondary school, I realised I wanted to study international business”
Claudia*

HWR students seemed to place more emphasis on the technical and practical content of the programme, while ESCE students remained completely silent on this theme.

“The technical aspect of the programme is another great competitive advantage of the programme” Hans

Together with the motivation for the programme content, the second benefit identified mainly by HWR students is the opportunity to secure a master in five years. They know that on average, a German student spends eight to nine semesters to obtain a Bachelor degree, after which there is no guarantee of access to the Master degree of their choice. They see the FGP as an excellent opportunity to reduce the length of their studies and to secure a Master in 5 years as students continue automatically as long as they have successfully passed their Bachelor years. This is a strong advantage compared to other French German programmes, as one HWR student states:

“This is a real difference compared to Reutlingen because their bachelor is in 4 years and you have to reapply for the master and you are not sure to be admitted. Besides, there are much higher fees in the master phase of the programme” Bruno

Overall, the findings emphasise the commonalities between ESCE and HWR students in the motivation factors for the FGP. Very few differences have been identified between the two sub-groups: HWR students tend to be more focused on the academic content of the programme and show a greater interest in securing a master Degree in five years, while ESCE students seem to be more eager to obtain a double qualification than their HWR counterparts. These differences, as well as the different attitude concerning tuition fees, will be further addressed in the discussion chapter.

4.6.9 Conclusion

The findings stress the coherence between the choice of the FGP and student identities, values and prior experiences. Psychological factors prevail over other more rational considerations in the choice process and students feel a sense of predestination or vocation for the programme, which explains why students choose the academic programme rather than the institution offering it. This sense of vocation appears to be the main determinant of

the choice, even if short-term and longer-term goals are also expressed by students. Short-term expectations relate to the experience of the programme itself, the expatriation period, the language proficiency, the socialisation process among the mixed group and the benefits of experiencing two different academic systems. Long-term goals focus on the international career prospects of students and on the recognition advantage provided by the double degree. Limited differences have emerged between ESCE and HWR students in terms of motivational factors, except for a stronger focus on course content and a greater interest in securing a master Degree in five years.

5 Discussion

5.1 Introduction

The main themes will now be interpreted in the light of prior research in order to provide a more synthetic view of the research findings and to offer an interpretation of the phenomenon under investigation.

5.2 Discussion on findings using the Theory of Planned Behaviour

The Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) offers a theoretical framework which provides a global representation of the beliefs affecting the decision to enrol in the FGP. The Figure 5-1 below represents the main concepts of the theory.

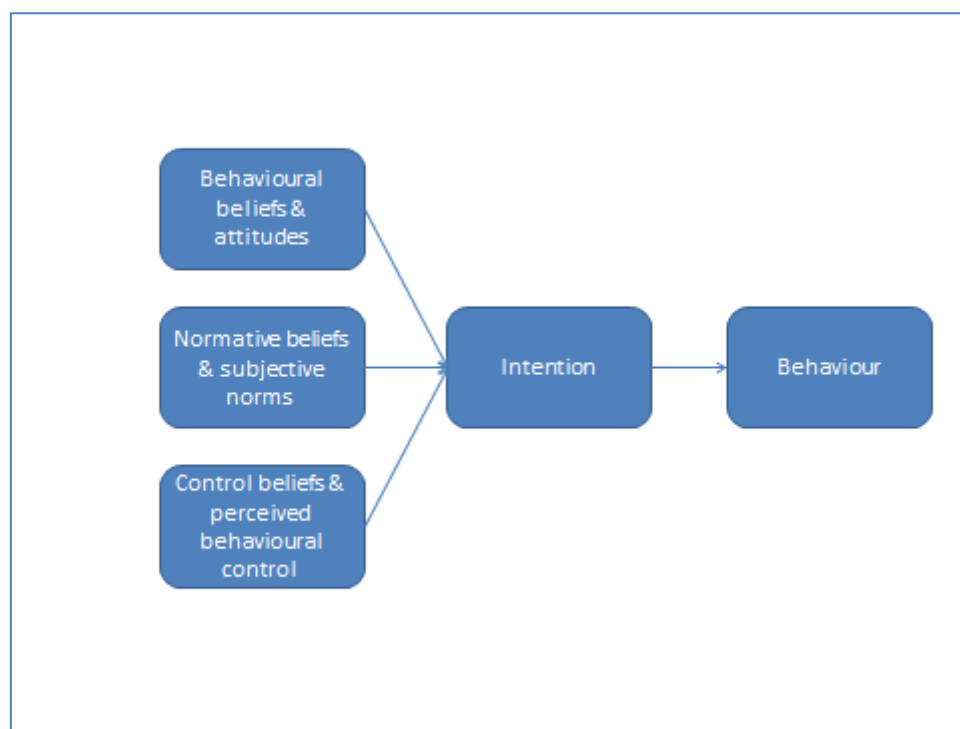


Figure 5-1: Model of Theory of Planned Behaviour from Ajzen (1985, 1991)

5.3 Student identities

The concept of identity is not directly mentioned in the TPB. However, the research findings suggest a strong correlation between student identities and the choice of the FGP. This is particularly obvious when students declare that their first motivation for the programme is

the coherence with regards to their personalities and prior experiences. We have seen that the cultural and social environment of students influences normative beliefs, that student values such as perseverance or ambition contribute to control beliefs concerning the capacity to complete the programme successfully and that prior experiences have equipped students with positive behavioural beliefs concerning expatriation periods or mobility programmes. This shows that the notion of identity, even if not represented in the TPB, contributes to the emergence of a number of normative, behavioural and control beliefs. It seems thus logical to include student identities in the analytical framework to illustrate their contribution to the development of all three types of beliefs. Some prior investigations have adopted the same theoretical approach and decided to add personality traits in the conceptual representation of the TPB, considering them as antecedents of normative, control and behavioural beliefs (Conner & Abraham, 2001; Goel, Jong & Schnusenberg, 2010). The Figure 5-2 below offers a revised version of the theory by including student identities in the framework.

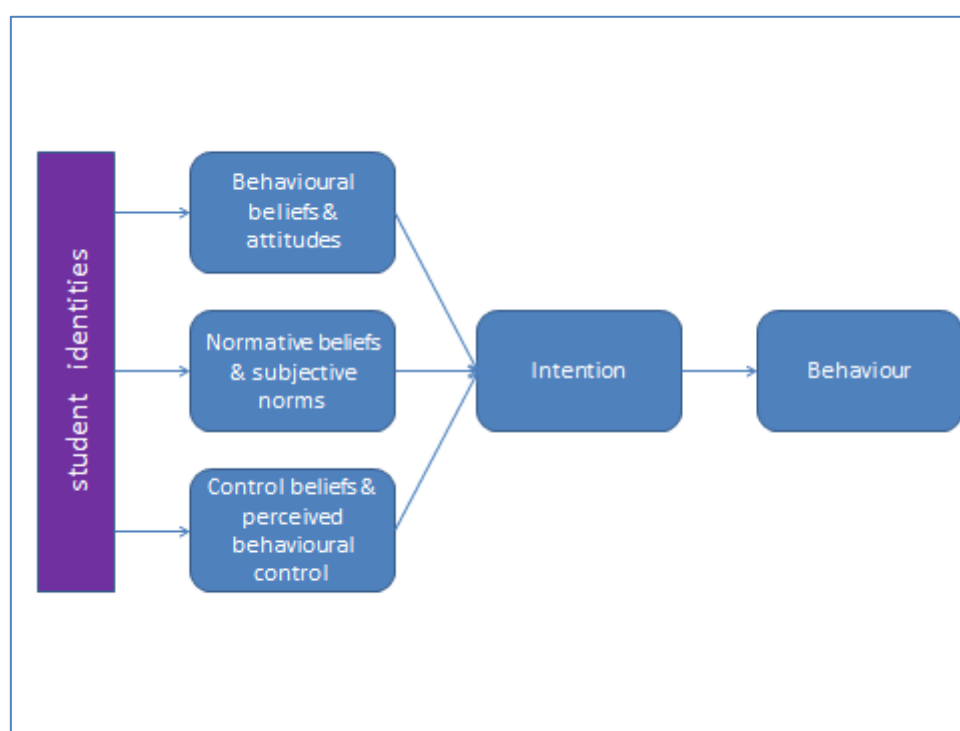


Figure 5-2: Revised theoretical framework from Goel et al. (2010)

This representation is coherent with research findings of Tinto (1993) who claims that enrolment decisions are affected by many psychological factors, like the personality of the

student, the level of motivation, the ability to adapt, or the orientation to study. Tinto (1993) and Entwistle (1990) propose a psychological model of college choice, where the influence of individual characteristics is emphasised in the college choice process. It can be argued that this also applies for the choice of a study path, given the similar nature of the decision.

Table 5-1 offers a synthesis of the personality characteristics identified in the analysis, which can be clustered in three main areas:

- Citizenship and the perception of citizenship by students
- Individual and collective values
- Prior experience and learning approach.

THEME 1: STUDENT IDENTITIES		
Categories	Description	
Citizenship	Half of the sample with two nationalities	
Perception of citizenship	Related to country of residence	Can change according to environment
	Double citizenship students	Kind of specific community
Values	Individual	Ambition
		Serious
		Hard-working
		Perseverance
		Commitment and motivation
		Strategic thinking and reflexivity
	Collective	Team spirit
		Open-minded
		Shared goals
		Individual success depends on collective dynamic
Prior experience	Mobility	Global awareness
		Sense of curiosity
Learning approach	Evolves during the programme	Mix of strategic and deep learning
		Shared capacity to adapt to the learning environment

Table 5-1: main features of student identities

5.3.1 Issues concerning access to the FGP

The high proportion of double citizenship students was already highlighted in the analysis. This feature deserves to be put in echo with the mission of the FGU and its four main objectives (French German University, 1997):

- strengthen the cooperation in higher education and research between the two countries;
- increase student mobility between France and Germany;
- promote and support the setting up of educational programmes leading to the award of two official degrees;
- provide graduates with bicultural competences on top of their professional expertise.

If the first three objectives are met in the FGP under investigation, it remains to be seen whether the final objective is really achieved, if half of the registered students already demonstrate a high degree of bicultural competences because of their double citizenship. A study was conducted by Kuhn (2012) on the influence of Erasmus exchange programmes in promoting a European culture. She concludes that “the Erasmus programme misses its mark by addressing university students who are already very likely to feel European” (2012, p. 994). A similar comment can be made concerning the FGP between ESCE and HWR as most students already had bicultural competences before applying for the programme. Of course, these competences will be further developed during the study programme and this was highlighted by students themselves, even those who were born French German. However, it would be worthwhile to critically assess the success of French German programmes against their capacity to attract student profiles that do not necessarily proceed from a French German background. This criticism on the risk of endogamy should be seriously considered by the FGU officials and by the course leaders of ESCE and HWR. Some students stated that the programme was more useful to students without a French German family background but at the same time, stressed that being in a group with French German born students was a great advantage to improve their language level. The question then is which balance institutions should look for in the composition of the group and how to open up the programme to new categories of students.

When asked about the perception of their national identity, single citizenship students used circumlocutions suggesting that they felt they belonged to one nation but that this perception could evolve over the course of the programme. They seemed to associate the belongingness to a nation with the residency in that same nation. At the same time, most of the students mentioned they felt European rather than “solely” French or German. This shows that students can categorise themselves as European in addition to their national citizenship. Interestingly, double citizenship students felt neither French nor German but rather considered themselves as a different community. These comments suggest that interviewed students have some kind of supranational identity, which can be European or even more global. Again, Kuhn argues that the “underlying rationale of Erasmus student exchange programme, town-twinning projects and pan-European research projects is that by living, working, and studying together, Europeans become aware of their commonalities and develop a supranational identity” (Kuhn, 2012, p. 994; Corbett, 2005; Petit, 2007). If the underlying rationale of the FGU is to create a French German supranational identity, the analysis tends to prove that most students already feel somewhat supranational when they apply and this balances the impact of the programme. If many researchers argue that international mobility fosters European identity (Fligstein, 2008; Recchi & Favell, 2009; Roeder, 2011, as cited in Kuhn, 2012) and a cosmopolitan attitude (Mau et al., 2008; Gustafson, 2009), more recent research argues that these programmes attract individuals who already possess the right attitude and values to embark on mobility programmes. As Kuhn puts it, “the Erasmus programme is preaching to the converted” (2012, p. 995) and a similar criticism can be formulated for the FGP in light of students’ comments.

5.3.2 Student self-concept and time perspective

To grasp in-depth motivations of students for the programme, it is essential to understand their value system. Vocational theories usually share the assumption that “people prefer, seek, and are most satisfied in occupations that are consistent with their views of themselves” (Gottfredson, 1985, p. 160). This assumption emphasises the influence of the value system on career choices and argues that vocational goals are shaped by the concept that one holds about oneself, or their self-concept, which Gottfredson defines as “the constellation of the perceptions and evaluations of themselves that people hold” (1985,

p.159). Interestingly, the self-concept is not a mere description of an individual's objective attributes but rather a perception of what people consider their place is in society. The relational dimension of the self-concept is a way to explain the behaviours people adopt in order to satisfy their needs or fulfil their goals.

The self-concept of French German students is based on individual and collective values which promote a culture of ambition, achievement and effort. Referring to early motivation theories, the type of needs which students aim at fulfilling can be defined as high order needs, such as esteem needs and self-fulfilment needs (Maslow, 1954), needs for relatedness and growth (Alderfer, 1972), need for achievement and affiliation needs (McClelland, 1961) or need for competence, autonomy and relatedness as described in the self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985). The choice of the FGP is seen by students as a means to develop individually and to eventually reach their professional and personal goals. This attitude can be related to the sociological model of status attainment, which is one of the two major theoretical perspectives of research on college choice according to Perna (2006). Not only do students hold a view on their current self but they also anticipate the person they would like to be in the future, introducing a temporal dimension of the self-concept. This capacity to project oneself in the future is an important characteristic of French German students, which leads to the concept of possible self (Markus & Nurius, 1986).

Leondari considers that "schooling and education are by definition future oriented" (2007, p. 21) as they represent an investment on people's future. The theory of possible selves argues that people's present behaviours are influenced by the views they have of their possible self: on the one hand, they are motivated by the desire to become the person they would like to be in the future, hoped-for selves, and on the other hand, by the fear of developing into someone they fear becoming, feared selves (Markus & Nurius, 1986). This time perspective has a direct impact on motivation to engage in specific activities and in the case of academic programmes, the notion of hope-for selves helps to understand programme choices but also persistence throughout the study path. French German students are able to perceive the instrumentality of the FGP to reach their goals and turn into future selves they hope to become. They show a high level of confidence in their ability, or a high self-concept of ability

(Eccles, 1983; Eccles & Wigfield, 1995) which provides them with higher expectations of academic success and overall higher performance compared to students with a lower perception of their ability. Students' future orientation and their ability to perceive the instrumentality of the programme directly impact their motivation to engage in the FGP, to adopt effective learning strategies and to perform better in order to attain their goals.

5.3.3 Prior experience and learning approach

The analysis emphasised that most students had had a prior experience in the partner country. This prior experience contributed to raising the global awareness of students and to develop their sense of curiosity. In many cases, it also enabled them to discover the academic system of the partner country and to develop a capacity to compare the two systems. Being exposed to different learning environments seems to have developed their ability to reflect on their own way of learning and to develop effective learning strategies for each educational environment. Raising student's awareness about the way they learn has been related to the concept of metacognition (Svinicki, 1999), or "thinking about thinking" (Brown, 1978). Indubitably, their prior experience of different academic systems has shown students that there are different ways of solving problems and helped them to understand the advantage of trying different academic approaches (Pressley et al., 1989).

The analysis suggests that learning approaches differ between students of the FGP but that they share the reflexive ability to think about one's own learning approach and to understand the differences between two learning contexts. According to Entwistle (1991), the way a student learns is influenced by the perception of the learning environment. Being exposed to the different educational environments of ESCE and HWR, it seems logical that students may adopt different learning approaches during the programme. The differences in assessment policies provide a good illustration of the different approaches adopted by the two institutions, ESCE using a combination of continuous assessment, group work and final examination, while HWR mainly resorts to final examination. The latter approach is based on student's self-regulation and was considered by students as more risky but also more likely to develop autonomy. ESCE more directed approach was seen as more school-like, safer to avoid failure. The analysis showed that students clearly identify the differences between

academic systems and manage to keep a balanced opinion about both systems, being able to see the advantages and disadvantages of each system. They seem to share the underlying belief that exposure to different academic systems helps to understand the national culture of the partner country and will enable them to develop their adaptability skills. This is reflected in the finding that students will adopt a strategic or deep learning approach (Entwistle, 1991), depending on the type of academic environment they experience.

5.4 Normative beliefs and subjective norms

The Table 5-2 overleaf reproduces the main external influences identified which can be split in two categories: influential others (parents, language teachers and counselling staff, and relatives and friends) and programme context (programme perceived quality, institutional reputations, country image, language perception, locations).

5.4.1 Influential others, cultural capital and habitus

My research shows that parents have a strong influence on students' orientation choices. We have seen that this influence is due to the own personal experience of parents (family tradition for the language, parental experience of the partner country), to the early decisions which they have made concerning their children (choice of foreign language) and to the type of life experiences they have exposed their children to in their school years (study trips, holidays in partner country, choice of FG secondary programme). This family background can be related to the concept of cultural capital described by Bourdieu and Passeron (1977) as a set of attributes, including language skills, cultural knowledge and codes of conduct which originate mainly from one's parents and which are also related to class status. According to Bourdieu and Passeron (1977), decisions made by individuals are affected by their cultural capital and the social and material context, and they tend to reproduce the main social pattern. In the choice of the FGP, there is an element of family tradition and cultural and social reproduction, particularly visible for French German born students, which pushes students with a specific cultural background to apply. Bourdieu and Passeron argue that the immediate environment of an individual has direct influence on their system of thoughts,

THEME 2: INFLUENCES AND SUBJECTIVE NORMS	
Categories	Nodes
Parents and family	Choice of foreign language
	Educational trips in foreign country
	Family holidays in partner country
	Choice of French German programme at secondary school
Language teachers and secondary schools	Transfer motivation for the language and country
	Provide guidance on higher education options
	Possible prescribers for French German programmes
	Promote participation in French German forum
Former FG students	Role of former French German students, notably during presentation sessions on the FGP
	Promotional role of ESCE students in student fairs, entrance examination, presentation sessions
French German University	Source of information on French German programmes
	Provides credibility to sponsored programmes
	Limitation: lack of communication on the role of FGU and lack of reputation
ESCE and HWR image	Positive image of FG programme and FG students conveyed by students, administrative and academic staff
	ESCE rankings and reputation
	HWR reputation (Internet search for HWR and word of mouth)
Image of Germany	Strong opposition of ESCE students to the mainstream caricatural perception of Germany as a country
	For ESCE students, Germany is a welcoming country, with good quality of life and economically powerful
Image of German language	Mainstream perception: useless, difficult to learn, downward trend
	For ESCE students: love for the language, pleasure of learning, professional advantage, situated learning
Image of French language	For HWR students: well regarded, source of differentiation, love for the language
	No mention of mainstream perception
Image of Paris and Berlin	Two cultural, cosmopolitan European capital cities
	Cities providing rich individual experience
	Meaningful link between Paris and Berlin

Table 5-2: identified influences and subjective norms

beliefs and perceptions, which they call *habitus* (1977, as cited in Perna, 2006). This set of dispositions and preferences is mostly acquired through the family context and subconsciously internalised as to define what an acceptable and reasonable decision is. In

the shaping of their children's cultural and social capital, parents' originally extrinsic motivational elements tend to be internalised by students, in line with the self-determination continuum described in Figure 5-3. This explains why all students agreed that their decision to enrol was an autonomous decision, even if made in agreement with parents.

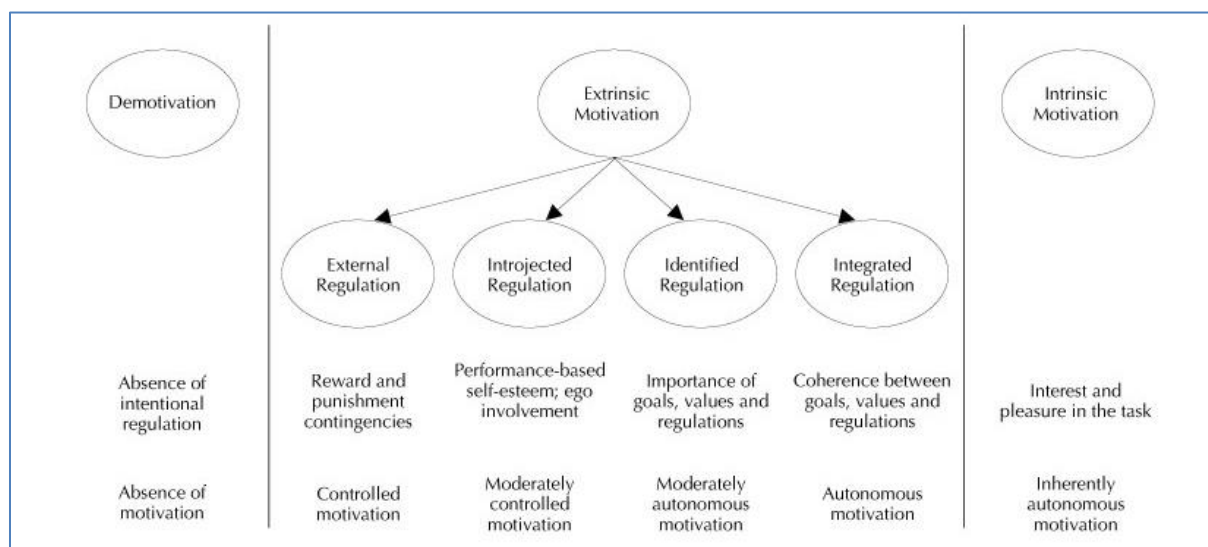


Figure 5-3: Self-determination continuum (adapted from Gagné and Deci, 2005, p. 336)

Most students considered their parents as supportive, concerned with their choice of study path, and they recognised the parental influence in their decision. This high level of parental involvement is considered as indicative of the current generation by Elam, Stratton & Gibbison (2007, as cited in Workman, 2015) and matches with Workman 's research on parental influence in student decision making processes (2015).

My research shows that the cultural capital and habitus of French German applicants derive mainly from their family environment, but are also influenced by their language professors and their contacts with former French German students. Language professors, former French German students and counselling staff also influence student decisions but to a lesser extent, the family environment remaining the main source of influence for higher education decisions.

5.4.2 Programme context

The programme context mainly refers to the perceived quality the programme and the reputation of the institutions collaborating in the delivery of the programme. Seemingly, this section focuses on more rational elements which should be evaluated via school rankings or official information. According to Manski and Wise (1983), the image of the institution and the quality of a programme are two of the main elements considered in college choice, along with costs, post-graduate opportunities, and non-academic factors. My research shows that the perceived quality of French German programmes is a belief shared by counselling staff, people involved in the delivery of the programmes and students. The sponsoring from the FGU adds credibility to the programme and the quality perception is enhanced by the selection procedure for admission.

The context also includes the locations where the FGP is delivered and the languages used for tuition. Since students spend half of their time in France and half of the programme in Germany, applicants are influenced by the image they have of the partner country and the image of the language of the partner country. These determinants of student choices would not be relevant for a programme delivered locally to a national audience but they appear to be critical for the choice of the FGP as students keep in mind their own future personal experience and their life in the partner country. French students, confronted with a rather negative image of Germany and the German language, seem to react against a normative pressure coming from their environment. The TPB suggests that the subjective norm is all the stronger as it comes from influential others who are considered as competent with respect to the decision to make. In their comments, French students highlight the complete lack of country experience of those conveying a bad image of Germany. This can explain why they seem to be immune to the social pressure. It could be argued that the negative subjective norm even reinforces students' motivation in a kind of rebellion against a norm considered as unfair. In this situation, French students act as if they wanted to change the status quo concerning the image of Germany and the German language in France. This can be compared with an attempt to change social structures and forces, instead of reproducing them. According to Giddens (1991) and Beck et al. (1994), in their theory of self and identity, individuals are constantly engaged in a reflexive process concerning their position with

regards to their environment. In most cases, they reproduce social structures but they can also decide to change them and the efforts of French students to improve Germany's image can be seen as an illustration of this phenomenon. The importance of the image of the country was already emphasised by Cubillo et al. (2006) in their research on factors influencing the decision to participate in a study abroad programme. Given the international dimension of the FGP, it is logical to find out that the image of the country and the image of the language are important factors influencing student choice. Similarly, the perception of Paris and Berlin as cosmopolitan capital cities, offering rich cultural opportunities and representing an important European political relationship, appears as another push factor to choose the programme.

To summarise, the social context and programme environment have provided most students with a positive perception of the choice of the FGP. This subjective norm has been influenced by the judgment of significant others, especially parents, and the negative normative belief concerning Germany and the German language, supposedly supported by a majority of French people, was disregarded by students because it was seen as irrelevant.

5.5 Perceived behavioural control, self-efficacy and attribution theory

The analysis showed that student concerns regarding the FGP were reduced by control beliefs, which made students quite confident about their ability to complete the programme successfully. The Table 5-3 offers a summary of the findings from the analysis and reproduces the main types of concerns expressed by students and their corresponding control beliefs.

As reflected in Table 5-3 overleaf, many control beliefs do actually come from the prior experience of students, or more generally from what they bring to the table (student identities, values, prior mobility experience, language ability, support from parents and friends). According to Svinicki (1999), the final performance of a student depends on the "learners' prior knowledge and its structure, their learning strategies, goals, beliefs, self-efficacy, and motivations" (p. 24).

THEME 3: CONCERNS AND CONTROL BELIEFS		
Categories	Nodes	Corresponding control beliefs
Selection procedure	Capacity to overcome the selection procedure and be admitted	Individual preparation for entrance examination, especially for single citizenship students
		Higher level of confidence on behalf of double citizenship students
		Student identities and values
Expatriation period	Limited concern for leaving family and home	Mobility is not a new experience for most students
	Shared concern with housing in Paris, mostly for HWR students	New technologies enables to keep in touch with family and friends
		Support from friends
Foreign language	Concern for use of foreign language in an academic context	Classroom environment with mixed group including bilingual students
	Higher concern for use of foreign language in an professional context	Time to improve language level before the work placement in year 3
	Concern for technical terms and vocabulary	
Academic concerns	Lack of concern on behalf of 1st year students	School supervision perceived as good
		Dedicated staff for the group
		Small group size facilitating learning
Financial concerns	Limited concern on behalf of ESCE for tuition fees	Underlying belief that tuition fees are parents' responsibility
	Concern for living costs in Paris for HWR students	Opportunities for student jobs
		Scholarships from French German University, Erasmus, etc.
English language	Concern for maintaining or improve high level of English	Subjects delivered in English during the programme
		opportunity to do the final work placement in a third country
		English tested during the interview
Programme completion	Very high level of confidence on behalf of students	Student values: efforts, hard-workers, motivation
		Team spirit and mutual assistance
		Selection procedure

Table 5-3: Identified concerns and control beliefs

The theoretical construct of perceived behavioural control derives from the concept of self-efficacy developed by Bandura (1977) as one of the main determinants of behaviour. Bandura defines self-efficacy as “the conviction that one can successfully execute the behaviour required to produce the outcome” (1977, p. 193).

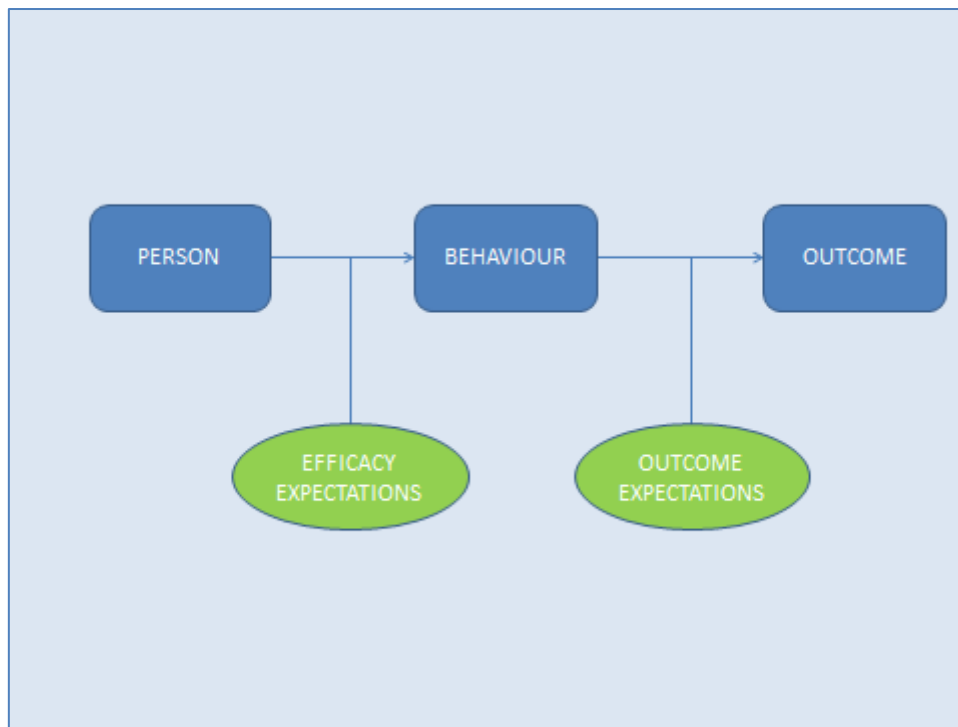


Figure 5-4: Diagrammatic representation of Efficacy expectations and Outcome expectations (Bandura, 1977, p. 193)

As illustrated in Figure 5-4 above, according to Bandura, efficacy expectations differ from outcome expectations: a person can be convinced that performing a certain behaviour will lead to certain outcomes but at the same time, they can have doubts regarding their capacity to cope with the behaviour successfully. On the contrary, a person with strong perceived self-efficacy regarding a specific behaviour will be more inclined to perform the behaviour as long as the outcome expectations are strong enough. In this theory, efficacy expectations directly impact the decision to perform the behaviour, but also the level of efforts invested in the behaviour. For French German students, the theory suggests that the high level of confidence identified in the analysis is a key determinant of their decision to apply and register for the programme. But it also supports that efficacy expectations will influence their perseverance and their ability to cope with difficult or threatening situations during the programme. This provides an insightful explanation of why some relatively high concerns, such as the ability to cope in a professional environment during the work placement, are perceived as manageable by students.

Students' control beliefs can also be analysed through the prism of the attribution theory (Weiner, 1980), which highlights the link between the motivation of learners and the

perceived reason for their success or failure. As an illustration, a student who believes that a good achievement was caused by luck will not be as motivated as a student who thinks that his/her success is mostly attributed to ability or work. If success is attributed to external forces which the individual cannot exert control over, this will lead to lower level of motivation than if success is seen as a consequences of one's own efforts and skills. In the present research, the values identified suggest that students believe in efforts, hard work and perseverance as determinants of academic success. Besides, the collective value of mutual assistance is seen as an additional support to collectively overcome individual difficulties.

All the above suggests that French German students have a high self-efficacy concept and share the belief that they control most of the determinants of success, either individually or collectively. They perceive their behavioural control as strong enough to overcome the selection procedure for the programme and engage in a five-year-long study path.

5.6 Behavioural beliefs and attitude

The analysis enabled the identification of five categories of behavioural beliefs shared by French German students. They are described in more detail in the Table 5-4 overleaf. Some of these beliefs certainly come from the cultural and social background of students and they may have been acquired or reinforced through previous experiences. For instance, the beliefs related to the acquisition of specific skills through international mobility can be based on previous study abroad experiences.

If beliefs are influenced by individual experiences, many of them are also supported by educational research. Altbach (2004) argues that students choose to participate in study abroad programmes because globalisation has increased the demand for graduates with a global perspective. His statement supports the fundamental belief expressed by French German students who stress the need of acquiring strong cross-cultural communication skills in today's world. Similarly, Green (2012) suggests that two of the main drivers of internationalisation are to prepare students for global citizenship and to prepare students for the global workforce. Deardorff and Jones (2012) also stress the need for cross-cultural

capability, which Aulakh et al. (1997) define as “to produce graduates capable of solving problems in a variety of locations with cultural and environmental sensitivity” (p. 15).

THEME 4: BEHAVIOURAL BELIEFS	
Categories	Nodes
Cross-cultural skills	Cross-cultural ability is necessary in today's world
	Moving out of comfort zone allows you to grow
	Cross-cultural communication skills require being fluent in the language and open-minded
International mobility	Long-term total immersion is the only way to achieve full mastery of a language and become skilled at cross-cultural communication
	Long-term mobility programmes provide deep cultural and life-changing experience
	Erasmus semester-long mobility provides superficial experience
	International mobility enables to develop individual soft skills
	Mobility develops self-awareness, self-critical ability and critical thinking
	Mobility increases independence and autonomy
	Mobility provides personal growth and maturity
	Mobility enhances tolerance and open-mindedness
Company internship	Work placement will help students to better define their career plan and will improve their employability
	Company internship will help students to choose their specialisation track
Double Degree	Represent an opportunity to differentiate
	Provide official recognition for efforts made during the programme
	Have an impact on the perception of student profile
	French German Double Degree will enhance employability and increase its geographic scope
French German programme	The programme prepares for global professional opportunities, not limited to France and Germany
English language	English is mandatory for international careers and necessary in a French German programme

Table 5-4: Identified behavioural beliefs.

There is a clear economic component in these statements which highlight the vocational mission of higher education. According to Clarke (2007), the university is increasingly expected to meet the market demand and this remark applies quite well to the FGP when we consider the belief that there is a lack of French German graduates in the European job market. Altbach (2004) remarks that many governments have realised the economic potential of student mobility and invested funds to increase their number of international students. The initiative of the FGU, sponsored by the French and German governments, is an

illustration of political decisions recognising the impact of international higher educational programmes on the social and economic landscape of both countries. It can be assumed that the same belief is shared by the staff at the FGU, at ESCE and at HWR.

There is also a high level of consensus among participants concerning the belief that international mobility enables students to develop a set of specific skills. Research studies have shown that participants in international mobility programmes develop a deeper understanding of global and complex issues (Carlson et al., 1990), adopt a more open attitude towards foreign cultures (Kitsantas, 2004), acquire stronger cross-cultural communication skills (Anderson et al., 2006), improve their language skills (Brecht, 1993; Brech & Robinson, 1993). Carlson et al. (1990) carried out surveys among students who had participated in study abroad programmes and they claimed that their level of self-confidence and maturity had improved. From the point of view of employers, Fielden (2007) confirms that multinational employers look for this kind of student profile: “multinational employers now look for graduates with a wide range of life skills that include awareness of other cultures and mastery of more than one language. They...now seek employees that are able to work throughout the world, as required” (p.26).

The belief that the company internship in the partner country will enhance students’ employability is supported by King et al. (2010) or Crossman and Clarke (2010) who see an extended period of study or work abroad as an added value which can boost employability.

Concerning the impact of double degrees on employability, Asgary and Robbert (2010) state that international double degree programmes are “significantly superior in terms of academic, intellectual and experiential learning” (p. 317) and claim that graduates from these programmes will be better prepared for managerial positions in global corporations. Culver et al. (2011) carried out a study with double degree students, faculty, alumni and employers to examine the strengths and weaknesses of double degree programmes. Interviewed students insisted on the difference between double degree programmes and simple Erasmus exchanges (just as French German students did) and on their personal development due to the programme. Employers agreed that the mention of a double degree on a resume would attract their attention and that they expected double degree students to

work harder and have a more global perspective than regular students. However, some employers also indicated some reticence in hiring double degree students because they felt double degree graduates would be demanding and would require challenges and an international exposure which they were not sure to be able to offer. The alumni group considered that they had progressed individually but that the double degree did not really increase their employability simply because “employers did not understand what a double degree programme was” (Culver et al., 2011, p. 56). This shows that double degrees are still a relatively new initiative which will require additional communication towards employers before it really has a proven impact on recruitment practices. In that respect, the belief that the double degree will enhance employability of French German graduates is not yet confirmed by the literature and would require additional research.

The FGP prepares for global career opportunities not limited to France and Germany. In 2014, the FGU carried out an alumni survey (French German University, 2014) and sent questionnaires to French German students who graduated since 2000. Out of 1582 respondents, 57% declared that they started their professional career in Germany, 26% in France and 17% in a third country. Only 31% of graduates were employed in the French German field. These figures tend to confirm the idea that French German programmes do prepare for international careers on a global scale. However, only 28% of respondents acknowledged the added value on their career development while 53% considered that their professional mobility was enhanced by the French German degree. In the light of these results, a specific survey for graduates of the programme between ESCE and HWR would be worthwhile to know the real situation for the FGP under investigation.

This tends to show that French German students beliefs are in their majority rational and confirmed by research literature and the survey carried out by the FGU. Students seem to have internalised a number of beliefs which are particularly frequent in multinational or cosmopolitan environments. It would be interesting to see whether similar beliefs can be found in less international environments or in different social contexts. However, the beliefs expressed by French German students have led them to develop an extremely positive attitude towards the programme and this is reflected in their motivations and goals for the programme.

5.7 Motivations and goals: utility value, interest value, learning orientation

The qualitative analysis enabled to identify deep student motivations as well as specific goals in relation to the FGP (see Table 5-5). Motivations can be compared to the reason for choosing the programme while goals represent the outcomes or benefits which students expect from the programme.

THEME 5: MOTIVATIONS AND GOALS	
Categories	Nodes
Choice coherent with prior experience and personalities	Natural decision for French German born students
	Choice strongly influenced by prior experience for other students
	Image of the programme coherent with student values
Choice of programme rather than choice of institution	Strong psychological or emotional factors in the choice
	Rational aspects taken into consideration
Long-term career goals	Vocational orientation of students and instrumental preoccupations
	Access to German job market and benefit of German economic strength for ESCE students
Short-term programme expectations	Experience life in partner country
	Achieve complete mastery of the foreign language
	Individual self-discovery journey, life-changing nature of the programme
	Benefits of being part of a mixed French German group and socialisation process
	Combined benefits of two academic systems, development of critical thinking and reflexivity
Recognition advantage	Academic and professional recognition of double Degree, especially for ESCE students
Specific motivations of HWR students	Direct 5-year Master degree
	Importance of the technical and practical content of the programme

Table 5-5: students' motivations and goals for the FGP

5.7.1 Vocation for the French German Programme

As we have seen, motivations were primarily influenced by psychological and sociological factors, like student identities, prior mobility experience and the general feeling that the programme was coherent with students' value system. According to Gottfredson (1985), people prefer occupations which are consistent with their view of themselves. In the FGP, the same statement can be broadened to the choice of a study path. The findings show that

not all students have the same level of information when they apply and the prevalence of psychological and sociological factors in the decision supports criticism towards economic models of college choice in that the choice of a programme cannot be reduced to a maximisation of investment (Johnson & Deem, 2003), nor compared to any other economic decision using a cost/benefit analysis (Cardoso, Carvahlo & Santiago, 2011). It also contradicts the view of Manski and Wise (1983) who claims that the main choice factor is the image of the institution, assessed against the perceived quality of programmes, non-academic factors, the cost and post-graduation opportunities. Hossler and Gallagher (1987) criticise economic models of college choice because these models neglect the inequality of access to information and underestimate the psychological and sociological factors which affect the decision. On the contrary, the present research emphasises less rational choice factors and claims that most applicants feel a kind of vocation for the programme, understood as a “strong feeling of suitability for a particular programme” (Tavares & Cardoso, 2013, p.305).

5.7.2 Student goals

However, this strong connectedness with the programme does not prevent students to consider more rational elements and individual goals in their choice. Closely related to behavioural beliefs, goals are more pragmatic and future oriented than motivations. The notion of goal or reward is implicitly present in the Theory of Planned Behaviour, as one can expect that the expected outcomes of behaviour reflect the behavioural beliefs. Other theories pay greater attention to the expected rewards of behaviour, for instance the need for achievement theory (McClelland, 1961) or Vroom’s expectancy theory (1964). In Vroom’s theory, the motivational force results from a combination of Valence (the value of the expected outcome of a behaviour), Instrumentality (the belief that performance will lead to the expected outcome) and Expectancy (the belief that performance will increase along with efforts), as shown on Figure 5-5 overleaf. This research shows that the instrumentality is an essential element of the equation among students of the FGP.

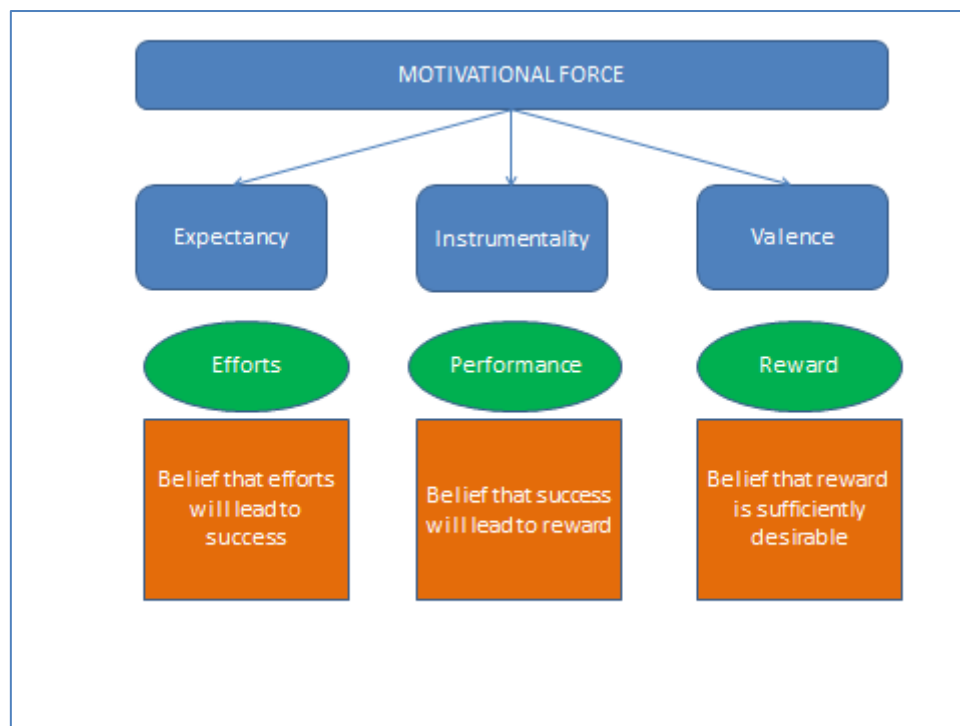


Figure 5-5: Representation of motivational force, adapted from Vroom's Expectancy Theory (1964)

Similarly, in the achievement motivation theory, Eccles (1984) describes the utility value as “the importance of a task for some future goal that might itself be somewhat unrelated to the process nature of the task at hand” (p. 90). This notion of utility value, comparable to Vroom's valence, can apply for long-term goals like career goals for French German students. Other researchers have emphasised that students with a strong perception of instrumentality of academic programmes for future career goals show higher level of motivation and are more effective in using learning strategies (Phalet, Andriessen & Lens, 2004). This could apply to French German students even if their career plans are still vague at the time they enrol.

The present analysis shows the coexistence of long-term goals related to career expectations and short-term goals related to the programme experience. Eccles (1984) opposes utility value to the notion of interest value, defined as “the inherent immediate enjoyment one gets from engaging in an activity” (p.89). Both types of goals represent the perceived instrumentality of the FGP, an instrumentality combining benefits expected from the experience of the study programme (experiencing life in partner country, fluency in the foreign language, socialisation process in a mixed group, benefits of two academic systems,

technical knowledge acquired) with positive outcomes achievable after the completion of the programme (career goals, enhanced employability, recognition of double degree, Master degree in 5 years). This combination of goals reflects two types of motivation: according to Eccles, utility value is a form of extrinsic motivation whereas interest value represents a form of intrinsic motivation for the behaviour itself. Entwistle (1998) also distinguishes extrinsic and intrinsic motivation in relation to learning. He claims that extrinsic motivation is instrumental and focuses on the completion of the programme, while intrinsic motivation derives from a personal interest in the programme itself. The analysis suggests that French German students combine both types of motivations in their learning approach. This may explain why there was no evidence of a shared learning approach among interviewed students, some showing signs of deep learning, traditionally associated with intrinsic motivation while other seemed to adopt a more strategic approach to adapt to the different learning environments and complete the programme in the right amount of time.

In terms of learning orientation, the findings denote that French German students have a mix of vocational and personal orientation (Taylor, 1983). The vocational orientation refers to the goal of finding a job upon completion of the programme, while the personal orientation refers to the self-development goal expressed by students. The Table 5-6 overleaf reproduces the different categories of learning orientations defined by Taylor (1983) and offers an explanation of the aims and concerns associated with each type of orientation. The orientation of French German students is mainly vocational, with both intrinsic (belief that the programme prepares for international careers) and extrinsic motivational aspect (academic and professional recognition of double degree), and personal with essentially intrinsic motivations (life-changing nature of the programme, life experience in partner country, fluency in the language). Academic and social orientations were not as present in students' comments, even if socialising was mentioned as an important factor and grades were considered important but for potential employers, stressing the vocational motivation behind the academic pressure.

Orientation	Interest	Aim	Concerns
Vocational	Intrinsic	Training	Relevance of course to future career
	Extrinsic	Qualification	Recognition of qualification's worth
Academic	Intrinsic	Intellectual interest	Choosing stimulating lectures
	Extrinsic	Educational progression	Grades and academic progress
Personal	Intrinsic	Broadening or self-improvement	Challenging, interesting, material
	Extrinsic	Compensation or proof of capability	Feedback and passing the course
Social	Extrinsic	Having a good time	Facilities for sports and social activities

Table 5-6: Student's learning orientations. (Beaty, Gibbs and Morgan, 1997, p.77)

Looking at the behavioural beliefs and the goals of French German students, it can be assumed that the ultimate motivation to choose the programme, even if not always verbalised, is to differentiate from regular students in an increasingly competitive job market. Students anticipate that, upon completion of the programme, they will have gained in-depth understanding of two countries, they will have experienced two academic systems, they will be fluent at three languages, they will have had practical work experience in the partner country, they will have developed personally, they will have acquired cross-cultural skills, their level of confidence will have increased, they will be part of the French German community, the double degree qualification will enable them to prove the specificities of their study path and will help them to have access to a larger job market. This list of expected benefits represents a form of accumulation of human capital (Bourdieu, 1986): students, consciously or not, expect the programme to enable them to tick a maximum number of boxes in an employment market which has become more global, especially at European level. Waters (2007) argues that overseas studies can lead people to think they belong to an exclusive class of global professionals and King et al. (2010) concur with Bourdieu suggesting that students participating in international mobility programmes accumulate “multiple and mutually-reinforcing forms of capital (a world-class university education), social capital (access to networks, connections), cultural capital ...and, eventually, economic capital” (p.32, as cited in Jones, 2013, p.98).

A similar idea is introduced by Tomlinson (2007) with students' orientation to the labour market and the notion of positional competition. He claims that students try to add value to their credentials in order to stand apart from other graduates. His qualitative study with 53 final-year graduates in the UK revealed that the "degree credential on its own was seen as 'not being enough'" (p.290). Tomlinson argues that students try to maximise their credentials in order to distinguish themselves and the belief on double degree and employability seems to corroborate this view. In this maximisation endeavour, students are increasingly aware that they need to develop a narrative in order to highlight their specific advantages compared to other graduates. This narrative includes not only official credentials, but also soft skills, achievements and experiences acquired during the educational programme: this is what Brown, Hesketh and Williams (2004) call the 'economy of experience'. Tomlinson considers that orientation to the labour market can change over time and that it is necessarily influenced by the social context. However, to stress the differences in individual approaches to employability, he defines a model of student orientation to the labour market based on 4 ideal-types: careerists, ritualists, retreatists and rebels (see Figure 5-6 below).

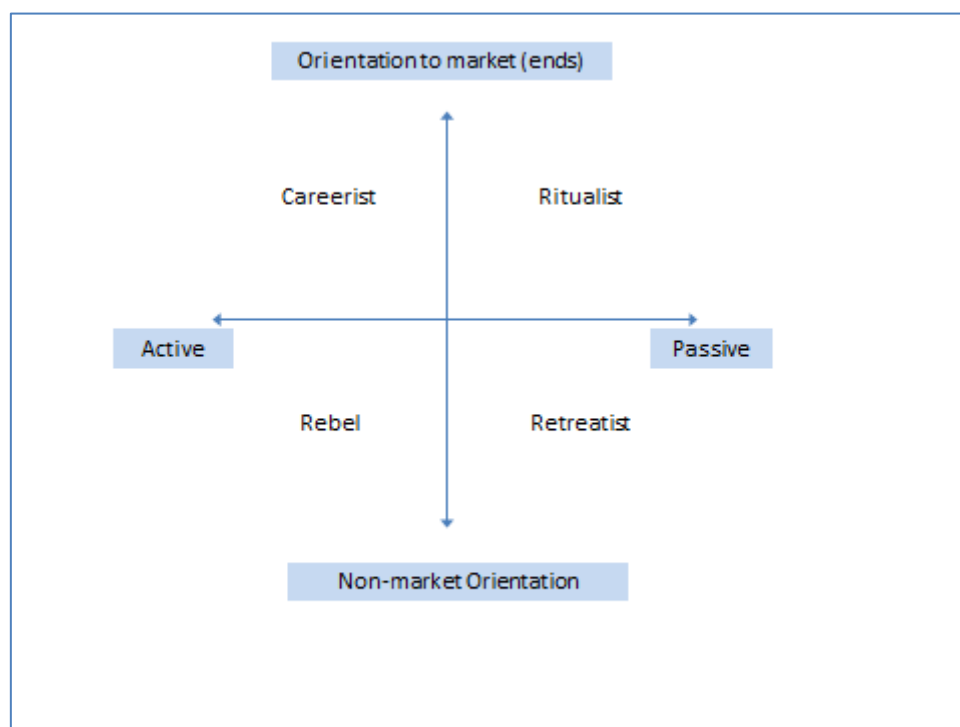


Figure 5-6: Ideal-type model of student orientations (Tomlinson, 2007, p. 293)

The findings suggest that French German students can be considered as active in managing their employability. Obviously, first-year students do not have such a defined career plan as more advanced students but they still demonstrate an instrumental approach of their studies in order to maximise their credentials, experiences and value on the employment market. According to Tomlinson's model, they would appear in the 'careerist' section because their beliefs and goals show that they have internalised employment market competition and that they wish to differentiate and stand out of the crowd of regular students.

5.7.3 Impact of higher education systems and macro-economic environments

We have seen that French German students share a number of values, beliefs and motivations which provide coherence to the student cohort. However, the research also brought to light differences between educational systems and identified dissimilarities between ESCE and HWR student motivations which require further analysis.

The findings suggest that ESCE students are keener to work in Germany than their HWR counterparts to work in France. A possible explanation of the difference between ESCE students and HWR students can be found in the sharp contrast between the two economies with regard to the unemployment rate (around 5% in Germany compared to 10% in France). If HWR students do not expressly mention France as a possible job destination, this suggests that they are also aware of the weaknesses of the French economy which lead them to consider a wider geographical spectrum of possible destinations. This denotes the influence of the macro-economic environment on student academic career choices. Similarly, the high level of unemployment among French graduates may explain the stronger interest of ESCE students in the double degree qualification, compared to HWR students. Depending on their national economic environment, students may feel more or less pressured to find a job upon completion of their academic programme. Differences in economic contexts may provide an interpretation of why ESCE students seem more eager to obtain academic credentials which they feel will enhance the recognition of their profile on the job market. In the same line, the positive employment context in Germany may affect HWR students' priorities and impact

their learning orientation, pushing them to consider the programme content as equally important as the degree credentials. This may explain the stronger emphasis of HWR students on the technical and practical content of the FGP, compared to ESCE students. One could also argue that differences in recruitment practices between France and Germany also affect student motivations: ESCE students may expect French employers to concentrate mainly on degree credentials in their recruitment processes, whereas HWR students' stronger interest in the technical and practical content of the programme may reflect German recruitment practices where acquired knowledge and skills are just as important as academic qualifications. In any case, these examples illustrate the impact of the larger economic context on student motivations and on their choice of academic study path.

Differences between the two national higher education systems may also explain the stronger focus on course content on behalf of HWR students and the lesser interest on behalf of ESCE students. The German higher education system is mostly composed of public institutions, with universities enjoying a prestigious status but considered theoretical, and Fachhochschulen that do not compete with traditional universities for research or prestige but are well regarded for their professional orientation thanks to the strong links developed with the industry. Within each category of institutions, there are rankings and differences in reputation but institutions do not compete as actively as is the case for business schools in France. As a result, in the absence of strong brand strategies, students tend to focus on programme content rather than the reputation of the institution. In France, this is totally different in the Grandes Ecoles system, where students are strongly influenced by school rankings and do not focus so much on programme contents, probably considering that the quality is taken for granted. However, we have seen earlier that for this particular programme, students claim they choose the programme rather than the institution which can seem contradictory at first glance. The ESCE students meant the French German dimension of the programme while HWR students meant both the French German dimension and the study field of international management. There may be another simple explanation for this difference, lying in the promotion done by the two schools: ESCE promotes the programme as "the French German programme", without mentioning the field of study, when the official name given to the programme by HWR is "FGP in international management". This simple mention could well explain the more technical focus of HWR

students, compared to ESCE students. This interpretation suggests that together with the economic context, the higher education system where a student is immersed and institutional practices also influence the choices made by students concerning their study path.

In fact, the differences between ESCE and HWR concerning admission procedures or learning environments which have been stressed by students derive from differences between national higher education systems and reflect institutional strategies which have been adopted to adjust to the national higher education context. We have seen that French German students tend to consider HWR learning environment as more risky and based on intrinsic motivational factors, as opposed to ESCE where the learning environment was seen as safer and based on more extrinsic motivational factors such as regular assessments and a stricter attendance policy. The differences in student perceptions concerning the learning context are to be related to the different legal status of the two institutions. HWR is a university of applied sciences (“fachhochschule”) providing free higher education, funded by the local educational authorities and offering a more traditional university approach. ESCE is a private business school, charging fees of approximately 10.000€ per year, selecting students via competitive examinations: as a result, once admitted, the successful completion of the programme becomes a shared responsibility between the institution and the individual student. In such an environment, it makes sense to offer a more secure educational approach in order to identify early on students who may experience difficulties. This approach is perceived by students as shifting some of the responsibility for student success to the institution and as less empowering than the German approach.

Differences in national higher education contexts also explain differences in admission practices between the two institutions: ESCE institutional reputation depends on its selectivity and the value of the Degree is directly related to the reputation of the institution. HWR, as a public provider, has the mission to develop access to higher education and does not usually resort to highly selective processes (except for the FGP). Institutional admission practices reflect underlying divergences between ESCE and HWR in their respective mission and position towards access to higher education. In particular, ESCE economic model based on restrictive admission practices and high study fees can be seen as conveying a form of

elitism, standing in opposition to the usual mission of public higher education providers such as HWR. Clearly, the national higher education context has an influence on student academic choices as it pushes HEIs to adjust their strategy to the environment and to design their enrolment and admission practices accordingly. At the other end of the spectrum, students develop their own beliefs concerning their national higher education environment and this in turn influences the choice of their desired study path and affects the nature of their motivation.

Another good illustration of this phenomenon is the motivation, specifically expressed by HWR students, of securing a master degree in five years. Here again, differences between national systems can provide some explanation. Following the Bologna declaration, German institutions have adopted a Bachelor/Master structure with a selection procedure for master entry. Grandes Ecoles in France do not comply with the system recommended by the Bologna declaration as some of them (like ESCE) recruit students for five years of studies leading to a Master degree, without granting any official Bachelor degree after three years. This explains why securing a master in five years is not seen as an advantage by French students who expected this from the Grandes Ecoles system. On the contrary, German students are well aware of the strong selection process to enter a Master degree in Germany. This example shows that institutional strategies, designed according to the educational context, produce different types of motivations on behalf of students. The research provides evidence of the influence of institutional context on the choice of study path.

5.7.4 Implications for college choice models

The research demonstrates that choosing the FGP is determined by psychological, sociological and contextual factors, and not purely by rational aspects. It does not mean that the choice does not include any rational or economic consideration: for instance, the motivation expressed by German students to complete a Master degree in five years can be related to what Hoxby (2004) calls utility maximisation of time and energy; similarly, as Manski and Wise (1983) suggest, factors like the quality of the programme, the image of institutions, post-graduate opportunities and costs are taken into account by students but

their perception is strongly influenced by psychological and sociological factors and they do not appear to be the main choice criteria. Concerning the attitude towards tuition fees, the research shows that there are strong cultural and probably social differences between ESCE and HWR students and this tends to prove that motivations and choice criteria will vary from a programme to another, depending on the context. Using the TPB as a theoretical framework enabled to identify and isolate the deep motivations pushing students to apply and the criteria they considered in their choice. The results show that economic models of college choice based on rational decisions and easy access to information (Cardoso et al., 2009) do not apply in the context of the FGP and suggest that each programme will have its own set of determinants.

As Henrickson (2002, as cited in Bergerson, 2009) says, the choice of a college or a programme is a developmental process but the research shows that this process starts early on with early decisions such as foreign language choice and early study experiences such as international study tours. The research reveals the strong influence of prior academic experiences and the predisposition they can create or not for the FGP. The different models of college choice tend to enumerate a list of criteria which influence the decision of potential students but they recognise that the number of criteria to consider is almost infinite and that a specific investigation has to be performed to understand the real motivations and choice criteria for a specific study path. As a consequence, the most applicable college choice models are those offering very broad categories of factors because they cover a very wide spectrum of criteria and influences. Bergerson (2009) suggest that college choice is the result of an interaction between the individual student, institutional characteristics and external factors. This proposition is broad enough to cover most of the situations.

The research highlighted that the choice of the FGP was motivated by a strong individual predisposition for the programme and by individual goals concerning the experience and the expected outcome of the programme. But the interpretation of the findings also revealed the influence of the institutional context, the national higher education system and some macro-economic factors such as the level of unemployment on student choices. For this reason, I personally find that Laura Perna's four-layer model (2006) is the college choice model offering the stronger explanatory power: by focusing on the student background, the

school and community context, the higher educational context and the social, legal, economic and political environment, the model enables to identify the influence of higher education systems and the macro-economic environment. Even if the present research only touched upon the institutional differences between ESCE and HWR (when it was considered necessary to explain the regulatory environment of each institution, and its impact of admission policies and tuition fees), it tends to reveal the strong influence of macro-economic factors on students' beliefs and strategies, thus validating Perna's model (2006). A more thorough analysis of the impact of higher education systems across borders may have led to additional findings. Concerning the social, legal, economic and political environment, the important differences between France and Germany regarding unemployment rates and job markets have been briefly exposed as a possible explanation for a seemingly higher interest for the double degree on behalf of French students. Here again, additional research on the influence of the employment market on students' concerns and educational strategies would probably lead to interesting results.

5.7.5 Summary

The Figure 5-7 overleaf offers a global view of the main constructs of the Theory of Planned Behaviour, with the addition of a component describing student identities, for French German students.

This summary evidences that student identities have an impact on behavioural, normative and control beliefs expressed by students. Behavioural beliefs reflect a mix of psychological, sociological and vocational motivations in the choice of the programme. Students expect both short-term benefits from the experience of the programme itself and long-term added value through a differentiation strategy aiming at enhancing their employability. Normative beliefs and subjective norms are broadly positive concerning the choice of the programme, especially when it deals with family influence where a form of social reproduction can be observed.

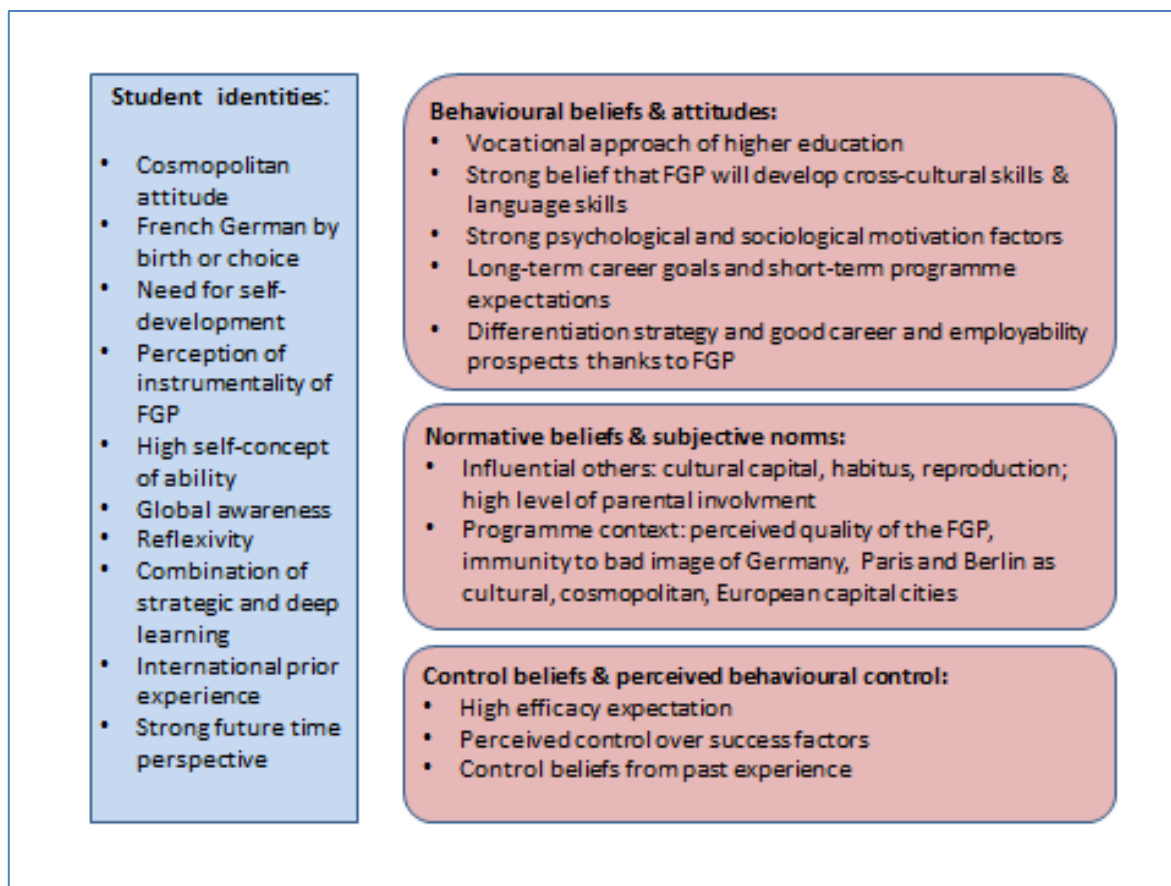


Figure 5-7 : Representation of findings, adapted from Theory of Planned Behaviour (Ajzen, 1985)

The only negative norm refers to the perception of the image of Germany among French students and we have seen that French German students do not consider the mainstream opinion as relevant. On top of the control beliefs identified in the analysis, most of them reinforced by past experiences, French German students are characterised by a high degree of self-efficacy and a strong perception that they have control over the success factors for the programme. This leads to a very high degree of perceived behavioural control, which in turn motivates the move from the intention to apply to actual enrolment in the FGP.

6 Conclusions, recommendations and limitations

6.1 Introduction

The research clarifies the motivations and choice criteria of students applying for the French German Programme (FGP). It was carried out in the context of a collaborative programme between ESCE and HWR with the aim to provide deeper understanding of the motivations and the choice process, to get a more complete image of student profiles, to identify possible differences between categories of students, and to detect the factors or persons influencing the decision to enrol. In that respect, the findings are useful to the administrative and academic staff involved in the management and delivery of the programme, but also to policy makers.

6.2 Contribution to new knowledge

To summarise the main findings of my research, it is useful to remind the original research questions:

Question 1: What motivates French and German students to apply for a French German programme? Are the motivation factors similar between the two student groups?

- In the case of the FGP, students are motivated by the study programme rather than by the institutions delivering it. The choice of the FGP prevails over the institutional choice and students apply for the programme because of the specific opportunities it offers. The quality, reputation and location of the institution are also considered in the decision but as secondary elements. Thus, my research tends to corroborate the view that each academic programme will have its own set of determinants for students to apply.
- Student decision to enrol in the FGP is more influenced by psychological and social factors than based on rational elements, even if there is a mix of motivation sources as reflected in Figure 6-1 overleaf. Students express a strong feeling of suitability and connection with the programme, which motivates their decision to enrol. This attitude

does not prevent them from keeping in mind their short-term and longer-term goals but they are somewhat internalised in their discourse.

- My research demonstrates that both intrinsic and extrinsic motivations factors influence the enrolment decision: short-term goals seem to have a more direct impact on student decisions as their immediate expectation is to benefit from the experience of the educational programme. Longer-term goals illustrate a more strategic and instrumental approach of the programme and refer mainly to the recognition of the programme by educational authorities and employers, and its expected impact on employability.

	Extrinsic motivation	Intrinsic motivation
Psychological and social factors	Internalised extrinsic motivation: beliefs, values, human and social capital	Vocation: strong feeling of suitability for FGP
Short-term goals: personal orientation		Interest value Accumulation of human capital Deep learning approach
Long-term goals: vocational orientation	Utility value Strategic approach Recognition of Double Degree	Preparation for international career

Figure 6-1: Chart of FGP student motivations

- No major differences have been noted between ESCE registered students and their HWR counterparts in the nature of their motivation. However, HWR registered students appear to be more sensitive to the programme content and to opportunity to secure a masters' degree in 5 years while ESCE registered students seem more eager to

obtain the double degree qualification. Regarding tuition fees, the research highlighted another strong difference in attitude which would deserve deeper investigation: ESCE registered students did not seem to consider tuition fees as a factor to be taken into consideration in their enrolment choice, while HWR registered students expressed a much deeper concern for the costs associated to the programme. In that sense, my research reflects the impact that the larger social, legal, economic and political environment has on higher education enrolment choices, in line with Perna's four layer model (2006).

Question 2: Is there a particular profile of French students applying for French German programmes? Similarly, is there a particular profile of German students?

- The theme of student identities emerged from the data analysis and the TPB theoretical framework was adapted in order to integrate this dimension in the analytical framework. No major differences were observed in student profiles; on the contrary, all students shared a number of values, beliefs and attitudes which are described in Figure 6-2 on the following page.
- On the academic side, French German students appeared to share a number of attitudes which will provide them with greater opportunity to succeed: a high self-concept of ability, enhanced reflexivity skills, the ability to adopt a strategic approach when necessary and to adapt to their learning environment, and the tendency to feel responsible for their own success or failure. These findings suggest that the selection process for the programme may be combined with a sort of self-selection procedure on behalf of students, thus creating a coherent group in terms of attitudes towards learning.
- My research also emphasises the strong influence of prior experiences on the academic orientation of students, especially early academic exchanges with the partner country. It confirms the correlation between a country image and the motivation to choose this country as a study destination.

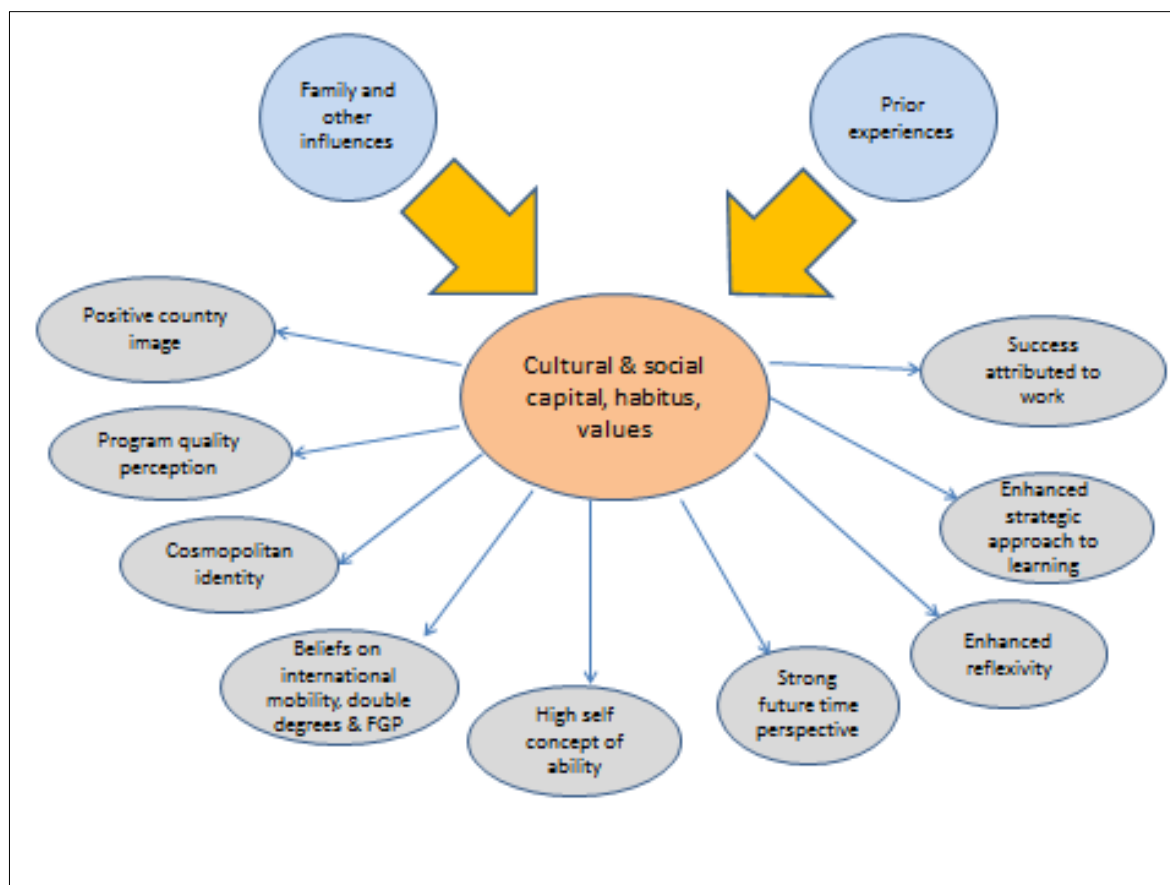


Figure 6-2: Graphic representation of FGP student profile

Question 3: What role does the family or influential others play in the decision to apply for a French German programme? Are there certain social groups that are more likely to be attracted by this type of programmes?

- Parental influence constitutes a determinant factor of motivation and choice for the FGP, as show in Figure 6-2 above. This influence is all the stronger as some early decisions appear to have a strong impact on academic orientation. My research shows that foreign language tuition and early academic exchanges, usually decided within the family environment, directly influence higher education choices in that they contribute to build a social capital which will impact future orientations. Besides, parents' own international experiences tend to shape the value system and beliefs of their children concerning their view of internationalisation.

Question 4: What are the barriers which prevent students from applying for a French German programme?

- In spite of the research limitations (described in section 6-4), the research enabled to identify the issue of Germany country image among French youth, which discourages students to apply for the FGP. Educational and political authorities should reflect on this problem and think of possible interventions to improve Germany's image.
- Besides this issue at macro level, the research identified a number of concerns in relation to the FGP, among which the selection procedure, the expatriation period, the language fluency and financial concerns were the most prevalent. The research demonstrated that these concerns were counterbalanced by control beliefs in the case of French German students, who showed a high level of behavioural control. It can be assumed that other students may not have developed such strong control beliefs and may be afraid of failure in the selection process or in the course of the programme. However, this is not directly shown in the research and further investigation should be carried out with a different student sample to precisely understand the barriers which refrain students from applying.

The research also enabled to obtain the following additional findings:

- The choice of the FGP participates in a strategy of differentiation, through which students expect to accumulate multiple forms of social and cultural capital.
- The double degree qualification also participates in this differentiation strategy where the national credential is no longer perceived as sufficient to obtain a competitive advantage.

6.3 Recommendations

6.3.1 Institutional level

6.3.1.1 Strategic options concerning the programme

In a context of globalization of higher education and increased comparability of academic credentials, the research confirms that the FGP is positioned as a quality programme designed for high potential students interested in international management careers. The programme enjoys a good reputation, is delivered between two attractive capital cities and is considered to provide students with important cross-cultural skills, language skills, international professional experience and two official master degrees upon completion.

The student population is composed of French German born students and single citizenship students who are already familiar with the French German environment. Many students come from French German secondary schools and simply continue their French German path in higher education.

Students tend to choose the programme before the institution: this is an interesting finding for programme leaders. This is particularly so on ESCE side because before applying for the programme, applicants must be admitted to the institution first, whereas on HWR front, students directly apply for the programme. ESCE should probably bear this in mind and reflect on the design of its own selection procedures within the limitations imposed by higher education authorities. Would it be more accurate to allow candidates to apply directly for the programme instead of obliging them to go through two consecutive selection procedures, one for the institution and then a second one for the FGP? On the one hand, it would be simpler for applicants who already have the information on the programme but on the other hand, it would prevent students who did not have the information before being admitted to the school to apply. Clearly, there is a strategic aspect in relation to the design of admission procedures, especially if the schools wish to attract candidates who are not naturally predisposed for the programme.

This situation requires that course leaders from ESCE and HWR clarify the aims of the programme and decide if the programme is designed mostly for students who already have a strong French German background, or if it is open to students with limited French German background, precisely to provide them with the French German dimension. If both schools wish to maintain the status quo, their recruitment strategy will focus on a niche market and promotional strategies will need to be very selective, targeting mostly international secondary schools, French German schools, secondary schools close to the border with the partner country and language teachers from these schools. Still, they would need to clarify the balance which they expect between French German born students and single citizenship students, in order to avoid feelings of unfair competition; and state more clearly the weight of selection criteria as this was a criticism mostly expressed on ESCE side (see table 6-1 below). Maintaining an elitist approach for the programme will oblige ESCE and HWR to keep it small scale and may generate criticism in terms of social reproduction, in line with McDonough's concept of organisational habitus, defined as ""a way to understand schools' rules in reproducing social inequalities" (Mc Donough, 1997, p. 156, as cited in Perna, 2006, p.113).

Criticism on selection procedure	Self-selection and the risk of missing some good profiles who may be afraid of potential failure
	Feeling of unfair competition: programme may be more interesting for single citizenship students
	Lack of clarity in selection criteria, especially among ESCE students where selection takes place after a semester

Table 6-1 : criticism concerning the selection procedure

If the objective is to open up to other profiles and to increase the size of the programme, then other means of communication should be used in order to reach a much broader range of secondary schools and ESCE and HWR should make sure that the programme information also reaches language teachers of these schools, as they have been identified as potential influencers. Most probably, such a strategic change would require adapting the programme content and the teaching style to the new student profiles (intensified language training, study trip to partner country, more directed learning), as well as the selection procedure which should be eased in order to reduce the psychological pressure on potential applicants.

According to Ajzen, “those who believe they have neither the means nor the opportunities to perform certain behaviour are unlikely to form strong behavioural intention to engage in it, even if they hold favourable attitudes towards the behaviour and believe that important individuals would approve of their performing such behaviour” (1988, p. 134, as cited in Tan & Laswad, 2009, p. 237). To avoid such a situation, ESCE and HWR should find ways to increase the perceived behavioural control of potentially interested students: providing students with the necessary support, insisting on the time available to make academic and language progress, fostering peer support, changing the elitist discourse on the programme, and running information sessions for parents are some possible avenues. In Bandura’s terms, it is necessary to raise the efficacy expectations of potential students because people have a natural tendency “to avoid threatening situations they believe exceed their coping skills” (1977, p. 194).

Another way of opening up the programme to new publics would be to set up a top-up master programme and recruit students with 3 years of higher education. This would give the necessary time to promote the programme internally but also to external applicants who may realise the interest of a FGP at a later stage. Such new programme developments would significantly broaden the access to the programme and would promote the concept of French German programmes outside of their natural influence circle. In the same line, maybe ESCE should think of changing the name of the programme: HWR uses the denomination DFS (French German study path) in International Management which partly insist on the French German dimension of the programme but also highlights the international management content; ESCE simply calls the programme the French German Programme which may deter some students to apply because the denomination is only connoted to the French German dimension. A name with reference to the course content and to the cities where the programme is delivered, for instance *International Management Programme Paris-Berlin*, may sound more appealing to new categories of students. This is especially true if we compare French stock ideas about Germany to the good reputation enjoyed by city like Berlin among students.

6.3.1.2 Programme improvements

Some advanced students made constructive critical comments which are listed in the Table 6-2 below. This information will be useful to course leaders in order to continuously improve the quality of the programme and take into consideration students' observations. New devices have to be designed to allow a better follow-up of students while they study at the partner institution; schools should look for affordable housing options especially in Paris; the academic coordination between the two schools should be strengthened in order to avoid redundancies or knowledge gaps. Another recommendation would be to design a common student handbook with all the course descriptions, rules and regulations and practical information on the programme and the two institutions.

Criticism on programme	Only expressed by more advanced students
	Lack of follow-up when students are at partner institution
	Lack of support for housing in Paris
	Lack of information on specialisations at Master level
	Concern with content coordination, redundancies or knowledge gaps.

Table 6-2 : criticism concerning the programme

Some aspects of the programme, appreciated by students, should definitely be kept; the differences in teaching approaches and educational contexts between the two institutions have to be understood as a clear advantage of the programme; the role of English as a mandatory component of the programme is another added value which institutions should probably communicate more clearly to students and parents. In order to reduce the potential concern related to the role of English language and avoid the programme being perceived as overspecialised in French German management, an option would be to integrate within the programme a semester of studies or a work placement in an English speaking environment. Not that the concern was very high but it could convince new categories of students to apply.

Concerning the policy of tuition fees, surprisingly ESCE students did not seem to consider them to represent a barrier for the programme. However, if both schools decide to open up the programme to a new public, they will have to investigate possible new financial arrangements. Even if ESCE students did not openly express their resentment at paying

much higher fees than their HWR peers, I personally consider that the difference in fee levels would not be manageable with a larger scale cohort. The regulatory environments on both sides of the border explain the differences in fee level but institutions should think of possible ways to overcome this difference in order to offer a fairer treatment to all students.

6.3.2 French German University (FGU)

The analysis emphasised that, if more advanced students understand the role of the FGU and support its endeavour to promote French German collaborations, the role of the Institution is less known to students at the moment they apply. There is a lack of visibility and reputation which should be tackled by the FGU, especially if the objective is to raise the number of sponsored programmes, as well as the number of enrolled students.

The challenge to attract more students to French German programmes will probably lead the Institution to encourage schools and universities to develop new programmes towards new audiences. In the FGU 2014 alumni survey (French German University, 2014), less than 6% of respondents were French German nationals, very far from the 50% of double citizenship students observed in the current sample. It would be useful for the FGU to look at the composition of student population of sponsored programmes in order to keep a record of the nationality of participating students and to check the percentage of double citizenship students for each programme. In order to avoid criticism for social reproduction and above all in order to bring new people to the French German environment, the FGU should encourage schools and universities to diversify their student recruitment and adapt their programme content accordingly. The impact of a sponsored programme could be assessed not only against its size or degree completion rate, but also against its capacity to create new vocations among categories not naturally interested in the French German dimension.

Parallel to the policy towards schools and universities, the FGU should increase its communication efforts and not only target French German colleges or language teachers from these institutions. It appears that not all French or German teachers in secondary schools in France or Germany are aware of the existence of the French German University.

We have seen that language teachers influence higher education choices and it seems reasonable to believe that the promotion of French German programmes should rely on their collaboration. Some specific training sessions addressed to language faculty or even administrative staff at college level would disseminate the activities performed by the FGU, improve the reputation of the Institution and allow better student orientation. Similarly, supporting language teachers in the organisation of short study tours in the partner country would be beneficial to increase the number of potential students in the long term, as we have seen that early study abroad experiences are strong predictors of interest in French German programmes.

Finally, the FGU should continue promoting cooperation with third countries in the framework of sponsored programmes. Triangular collaborations make sense to support the view that French German programmes really prepare for international careers, outside of the limited geographic scope of the two countries. Besides, it would enable students to add another string to their bow and enhance their employability by experiencing a third environment and mastering a third language.

6.3.3 National educational authorities and policy makers

The decision to create the FGU was a political initiative by Germany and France. As a binational political entity, the FGU relies on a budget decided between the two national administrations and is subject to be impacted by the political changes taking place in either country. The analysis shows that students who are enrolled on the programme between ESCE and HWR have a very positive opinion of their study programme and would highly recommend it. According to the FGU 2014 alumni survey (French German University, 2014), almost 90% of former French German students would recommend without hesitation their programmes to potential students. This suggests that French German programmes definitely meet a certain demand and have their utility in the international higher education offer. In this respect, the FGU activities should be further developed and somewhat protected from potential political changes which could affect its operations. Finding additional revenue

sources, such as sponsorship from big French or German corporations, would help the FGU to become more autonomous and less dependent on changing political decisions.

Considering the findings of the research, there are two areas where educational authorities should intervene to support the development of French German programmes and increase the number of participating students: intervention in secondary or even primary school years, and intervention concerning the image of Germany among French youth. The FGU can only be effective if educational policies have been put in place to promote French studies in German secondary schools and vice versa. We have seen that early decisions such as the choice of the foreign language and early study abroad experiences have a direct impact on the perception of the partner country and the propensity to opt for a FGP. After more than 50 years of French German friendship, how can we explain the survival and strength of negative clichés on Germany among French youth? It is certainly too big an issue to be solved with a couple of academic interventions in French colleges but it is worrying for the future of the French German relationship. The resistance of stock ideas in an environment where people have free access to information, can easily travel, have many communication tools at their disposal, is surprising and would probably deserve that educational authorities on both sides of the border took a close look at the phenomenon. The FGU cannot change the situation on its own and the analysis suggests that interventions have to be made much earlier on. Much broader cooperation should be organised at secondary level between the two countries, based for instance on the development of more systematic study tours, students exchanges, faculty exchange, and support for early language training, in order to get rid of stock ideas and change the perception of the partner country. This seems all the more necessary as France and Germany present themselves as the French German couple or the French German motor of Europe. National educational authorities and policy makers should be well advised to investigate why national perceptions seem to be imbalanced between France and Germany and to think of possible actions to remedy the situation.

6.4 Limitations of the research

6.4.1 The study sample

Due to the research context and the timing of the research, it was not possible to carry out interviews with applicants for the FGP. The interview phase took place between mid-January and mid-March 2015, at a time when recruitment had already taken place for the programme. In order to understand the motivations and choice criteria for the programme, it would have been preferable to focus on applicants rather than on students who had already registered on the programme. This limitation may have introduced a bias or a risk of “post-hoc rationalisation of emotionally driven decisions” (Obermeit, 2012, p. 214). If the sample was relatively balanced between ESCE and HWR students, half of the interviewed students were already advanced in their programme when the interview took place. Even if during the interviews, constant reference was made to the moment when they applied, students may have expressed opinions or motivations which have appeared during the course of the programme and were not as present at the moment of the application. In order to reduce this risk, students were frequently asked if they would have made the same comment when they applied with questions like: were you aware of this when you applied? Did you think the same way when you applied? However, a longitudinal study with one specific cohort from application to graduation would provide useful information to fully grasp students’ evolution throughout the programme and see how their motivations may change over time.

6.4.2 Potential researcher bias and other limitations

I started my career at ESCE as Director of International Relations and in that position, not only was I a strong supporter of international educational programmes but I participated in the setting-up of the FGP in collaboration with HWR and acted a course leader for the programme for several years. As a consequence, I recognise that I am emotionally involved with the programme and that I hold my own opinion about it. Since I was aware of this potential risk of researcher’s bias, I engaged in an ongoing self-reflective process in order to

understand the preconceptions, assumptions or beliefs I had regarding the research question. Identifying my own opinions and keeping in mind their potential influence on the research process helped me to keep them aside as much as possible.

In the data collection, I had to pay special attention to the way I was perceived by students during the interviews. Due to logistical limitations, since participants were spread out in different locations, I was unable to organise focus groups which would probably have reduced the relational risk with respect to my role as Deputy CEO of the French institution. As a consequence, the data were collected exclusively from individual interviews and some students may have been tempted to make more positive comments about the programme or may have been influenced in their answers. For example, it may have influenced the discourse of German students concerning French people or their perception of France. To what extent my nationality and my role as Deputy CEO have influenced students in their straightforwardness is difficult to evaluate but it seems reasonable to acknowledge this risk in relation to the research context. Similarly, the design of the research involved a significant part of cross-cultural communication with the related risk of misunderstanding or misinterpretation. Such risk was reduced by encouraging participants to rephrase their answers whenever it was felt necessary and at the end of the data collection process, through member verification. However, participants' opinions may have been expressed slightly differently if everyone had communicated in their native language.

By bringing back personal memories and feelings with respect to my own choice of academic path, the data analysis made me realise how complex my role was in the research process and how difficult it was to separate my own views from the opinions expressed by participants. My own awareness of the risk, however, helped me to concentrate on student words in order to avoid distorting their experience in the analysis. The use of NVivo provided me with a systematic coding system which allowed me to compare the significance of themes according to their recurrence, and thus identify the most important ones. Looking back, I think the support of the software was necessary to carry out a more rigorous scientific analysis and limit the interfering of my own personal opinions with the findings of the research. The continual process of reflexivity, both written in my journal and discussed with my supervisor also helped to reduce this potential limitation.

6.4.3 Possible further research

The qualitative analysis enabled to understand the motivation and choice factors of students on the FGP between ESCE and HWR but the research should be replicated with other French German programmes to check its degree of generalizability. Given that all French German programmes integrate a study period in the partner country and strong language training, it is to be expected that similar motivations will be found with regards to these aspects. However, depending on the structure of the programme, the level of the degree, the locations where it is delivered, the academic approach, the set of motivation and choice factors may also differ. Additional quantitative research would also help to rank the relative importance of motivations and choice factors.

Some differences appeared in the analysis between ESCE and HWR students, specifically concerning the attitude towards tuition fees. The qualitative analysis did not provide detailed information on the socio-economic background of students. In order to have a full picture of the reasons underlying such differences, it would be useful to investigate the socio-economic status of students registered in the programme between ESCE and HWR and their beliefs concerning fees. We have seen that national higher education contexts have an impact on student behaviours and that France has a bigger private higher education sector than Germany; it would be interesting to compare French and German students' beliefs and perceptions concerning tuition fees in order to discover whether German students would be ready to pay higher fees for a similar programme, considering the benefits they can expect from it.

The research evidenced a form of family reproduction in early educational decisions and emphasised that early decisions are good predictors of the probability to opt for French German programmes. Additional research on the choice of a foreign language would help to understand the decision making process and would provide educators with tools to intervene and adjust policies adequately.

The theoretical framework chosen for the research enabled to highlight the main beliefs held by students concerning the programme. To close the loop, it would be necessary to research some of these beliefs in order to check their accuracy: additional research carried out with alumni from the programme would help to judge whether the FGP really prepares for international careers and enhances employability; in the same line, additional research on double degrees and their impact on employability would be necessary. Such research would also provide course leaders with reliable information and would help them to promote the programme for what it really is.

6.5 Final comments

I started working on this thesis in a rather turbulent professional environment where management restructuring was taking place and I was eventually made redundant at the time I was interviewing participants in my research. Fortunately, I managed to complete the data collection process before leaving the institution but the following research phases were no longer carried out in connection with the original research setting. Ironically, for a thesis focusing on motivation, this situation led me to experience in myself the ups and downs of my own motivation level. One of the aims of practitioner research is to inform future interventions and provide useful knowledge to professionals dealing with similar educational issues and I was relying on my findings to strengthen the collaboration between ESCE and HWR. The change in my professional situation affected my original goal and my perception of the usefulness of the research. I struggled to keep motivated in order to complete this academic task which reminded me of my former professional environment. However, this adverse situation also gave me more time to concentrate on the completion of the thesis.

Looking back, the thesis helped me to develop a more rigorous and detailed approach in the interpretation of data, it gave me access to the field of motivational theories and college choice models, it introduced me to new techniques and tools for data generation and analysis, and it increased my overall capacity to conceptualise and critically analyse data with the support of the corresponding literature base. Finally, more than motivation, this exercise showed me what perseverance means.

Bentz and Shapiro (1998) consider that “research can contribute to the transformation of one’s self or identity” (p. 5). Together with the initial research aims of knowledge generation and contribution to the improvement of professional practice, this personal transformation was an unexpected outcome of the research process. This investigation confronted me with concepts such as cultural and social capital, social reproduction and elitism and obliged me to reflect on my own values as an educationalist. I think that higher education institutions should be more aware of the underlying beliefs associated to these particular approaches and should strive to diversify their student intake and facilitate wider access to educational programmes such as the FGP. This research demonstrates how complex the motivation factors are in the choice of an academic path and how unequal the access to information is between categories of students. By promoting access to a more diverse student population and fostering equal opportunities, higher education institutions will meet their mission of social responsibility. Part of the strong social unrest currently experienced in France and elsewhere is deeply rooted in the failure of educational systems to reduce social inequalities and provide equal opportunities. HEIs would be well advised to reflect on their role and responsibility in society and to adjust their practice to meet this important challenge.

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Appendix 1: University of Liverpool Ethical Approval



UNIVERSITY OF
LIVERPOOL

ONLINE
PROGRAMMES

Dear Yves

I am pleased to inform you that the EdD. Virtual Programme Research Ethics Committee (VPREC) has approved your application for ethical approval for your study. Details and conditions of the approval can be found below.

Sub-Committee: EdD. Virtual Programme Research Ethics Committee (VPREC)
Review type: Expedited
PI:
School: Lifelong Learning
Title:
First Reviewer: Prof. Morag A. Gray
Second Reviewer: Dr. Lucilla Crosta
Other members of the Committee: Dr. Eileen Kennedy

Date of Approval: 13th November 2014

The application was APPROVED subject to the following conditions:

Conditions

- | | | |
|---|-----------|---|
| | | M: All serious adverse events must be reported to the VPREC within 24 hours of their occurrence, via the EdD Thesis Primary Supervisor. |
| 1 | Mandatory | |

This approval applies for the duration of the research. If it is proposed to extend the duration of the study as specified in the application form, the Sub-Committee should be notified. If it is proposed to make an amendment to the research, you should notify the Sub-Committee by following the Notice of Amendment procedure outlined at <http://www.liv.ac.uk/media/livacuk/researchethics/notice%20of%20amendment.doc>.

Where your research includes elements that are not conducted in the UK, approval to proceed is further conditional upon a thorough risk assessment of the site and local permission to carry out the research, including, where such a body exists, local research ethics committee approval. No documentation of local permission is required (a) if the researcher will simply be asking organizations to distribute research invitations on the researcher's behalf, or (b) if the researcher is using only public means to identify/contact participants. When medical, educational, or business records are analysed or used to identify potential research participants, the site needs to explicitly approve access to data for research purposes (even if the researcher normally has access to that data to perform his or her job).

Please note that the approval to proceed depends also on research proposal approval.

Kind regards,

Morag Gray

Chair, EdD. VPREC

Appendix 2: HWR Approval



Title of the Research Project:

"Understanding student motivations and choice criteria to enrol in a French German double degree program"

Researcher: Yves Marmiesse

1. I confirm that I have read and have understood the Participant Information Sheet dated October 2014 for the above study. I have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions, and have had these answered satisfactorily.
2. I hereby grant permission to the researcher for all relevant data access, facility use, and use of personnel time for research purposes.
3. I understand that, under the Data Protection Act, participants in the research can at any time ask for access to the information provided and can also request the destruction of that information if they wish.
4. I understand that information on the organisation will be anonymised, will be maintained as proprietary information, and will be kept in confidentiality.

Sincerely,

Name and position of Person granting permission:

Prof. Dr. Bernd Reissert
President
Berlin School of Economics and Law – HWR
Badensche Straße 52
10825 Berlin - Germany

Date

Dec 3, 2014

Signature



Hochschule für
Wirtschaft und Recht Berlin
Berlin School of Economics and Law
Prof. Dr. Bernd Reissert
Präsident

Researcher's name:

Yves Marmiesse

Date

Signature

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Last updated: August 13, 2012

Appendix 3: ESCE Approval



Title of the Research Project:

"Understanding student motivations and choice criteria to enrol in a French German double degree program"

Researcher: Yves Marmiesse

1. I confirm that I have read and have understood the Participant Information Sheet dated October 2014 or the above study. I have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions, and have had these answered satisfactorily.
2. I hereby grant permission to the researcher for all relevant data access, facility use, and use of personnel time for research purposes.
3. I understand that, under the Data Protection Act, participants in the research can at any time ask for access to the information provided and can also request the destruction of that information if they wish.
4. I understand that information on the organisation will be anonymised, will be maintained as proprietary information, and will be kept in confidentiality.

Sincerely,

Name and position of Person granting permission:

Mr. Paul-Jacques Lehmann
Director of ESCE
10, rue Sextius Michel
75015 Paris - France

Date

Signature

24/11/2014

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be "P. Lehmann", written over a horizontal line.

Researcher's name:

Yves Marmiesse

24/11/2014

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be "Y. Marmiesse", written over a horizontal line.

Date

Signature

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Last update: August 13, 2012

Appendix 4: Participant Information Sheet



Participant Information Sheet

Title of Study

"Understanding student motivations and choice criteria to enrol in a French German double degree programme."

You are being invited to participate in a research study. Before you decide whether to participate, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and feel free to ask us if you would like more information or if there is anything that you do not understand. Please also feel free to discuss this with your friends or relatives if you wish. We would like to stress that you do not have to accept this invitation and should only agree to take part if you want to.

Thank you for reading this.

Purpose of the study

As a result of a joint initiative of the French and German governments, the French German University was created in year 1997 with the mission to strengthen the cooperation in higher education and research between the two countries, to increase student mobility between France and Germany, to promote and support the setting up of educational programmes leading to the award of two official degrees, and to provide graduates with bicultural competences on top of their professional expertise. After 17 years of operations, more than 150 educational programmes have been accredited and are sponsored by the French German University and more than 5500 students are enrolled in bilateral collaborations between French and German higher education institutions.

Participant Information Sheet v3
October 2014
YM

This development illustrates a more global trend towards the setting up of international double degree programmes. The case of the French German University however is specific in the sense that it is the first (unique) example of a publicly funded organisation officially created in order to promote double degree programmes and cross-border education between two countries. After years of operation, the balance seems positive, and in year 2010, the French and German governments stated their intention to keep expanding the number of French German accredited programmes in order to double the number of participating students by year 2020.

In order to achieve this ambitious objective, the French German University (which does not run directly any academic programme nor activity) will not only require the support of higher education institutions from both countries, which are the only ones entitled to set up collaborative programmes leading to two official degrees, but will also need to raise the interest of students for this type of study programmes. In a strongly competitive European higher educational landscape, characterised by a huge diversity of academic programmes, easy student mobility and almost automatic recognition of academic credentials between national academic authorities, it thus becomes necessary to better understand the factors which influence students to choose a French German programme, rather than any other academic study path.

In this context, it would be very helpful to better understand the profile of students who apply for French German programmes and to determine the factors which push them to apply. At the same time, identifying potential barriers would also help to better design cross-border programmes to suit student expectations. This would help institutions to promote their programmes more efficiently and policy makers to identify the potential adjustments which may have to be made in order to increase their overall number of students registered on French German programmes.

The current research aims at investigating the decision process followed by students applying for French German programmes in order to provide useful information for policy makers and course leaders.

Participation in the research and methodology:

I will be using a qualitative approach, which will help to understand the nature of the choice factors and to identify recurrent themes which will emerge from the analysis. The research will involve individual semi-structured interviews of French and German students in order to enable comparisons between the two sub-groups of students.

In order to reduce possible bias in student responses due to differences in programme structures, study locations, or any other related aspect, I decided to concentrate the analysis on one particular programme and to focus on the French German programme established between ESCE (Paris) and HWR (Berlin). The study group will be composed of students currently registered or about to apply for the programme and this is the reason why you have been invited to participate in the research. The objective is to obtain an equal representation of French and German students to allow comparisons, and to have a gender distribution in line with the population of the programme. Students will have a period of two weeks to confirm their participation in the research, after receiving the Participant Information Sheet.

Participants will be asked to take part in an individual interview. I will run the interviews personally, either on site (whenever possible) or via skype or any other similar device. To ensure privacy, on site interviews will be carried out in a private office and skype or phone interviews, if any, will be made from private settings on both sides. The interviews will be conducted in English.

Interviews will not last more than one hour. Participants will be able to take a break anytime and if they experience any discomfort, the interview can be resumed on another occasion if necessary. The interviews are scheduled between mid-November 2014 and the end of January 2015.

In order to facilitate the transcription process, I am planning to record the individual interviews unless the participant prefers otherwise. After each interview, the participant will be asked to check the record of his/her own interview to avoid any mistake in the transcription process. I may contact participants after the interview if there is the need to clarify some aspects of the interview but this should be rather limited.

Confidentiality of the research process:

Both ESCE and HWR have granted me the authorisation to undertake this research with the group of students registered on the French German programme.

I would like to stress that I am carrying out this research in my quality of doctoral student at the University of Liverpool, and not as deputy CEO of ESCE. The research I am undertaking is an academic exercise which will not interfere in any way with your studies at ESCE or HWR. All data gathered through the interviews will be anonymised and coded in order to ensure complete privacy and confidentiality. The data will be kept on a password protected computer and also saved on a password protected external hard drive memory for 5 years. The results of the research will be made available to the participants and may lead to publications.

Participation in this research is totally voluntary. Potential participants will be able to contact me to ask for additional information if necessary. They will have two weeks to confirm their participation. and in case you should you decide to participate, you will be free to withdraw at any time without the need to provide any explanation and without any risk of incurring any penalty or any disadvantage. Similarly, should any participant experience any discomfort during the research process, I should be informed immediately.

Complaint procedure:

If you are unhappy, or if there is a problem, please feel free to let me know by using my contact details I will try to help. If you remain unhappy or have a complaint which you feel you cannot come to me with, then you should contact my thesis supervisor, Clare Pickles at clare.pickles@ohecampus.com or the Research Governance Officer at liverpoolethics@ohecampus.com. When contacting the Research Governance Officer, please provide details of the name or description of the study (so that it can be identified), the researcher involved, and the details of the complaint you wish to make.



Contact Details for any further questions:

- My contact details are:
Yves Marmiesse
ESCE
10 rue Sextius Michel 75015 Paris
Mobile phone: +33
yves.marmiesse@online.liverpool.ac.uk

- The contact details of the Research Participant Advocate at the University of Liverpool are:
001-612-312-1210 (USA number)
Email address liverpoolethics@ohcampus.com

Please keep/print a copy of the Participant Information Sheet for your reference.
Please contact me and/or the Research Participant Advocate at the University of Liverpool with any question or concerns you may have.

Participant Information Sheet v3
October 2014
YM

Appendix 5: Participant Consent Form



Committee on Research Ethics

PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

Title of the research project:

“Understanding student motivations and choice criteria to enrol in a French German double degree programme.”

Researcher: Yves Marmiesse

**Please
initial box**

1. I confirm that I have read and have understood the information sheet dated October 2014 for the above study. I have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions and have had these answered satisfactorily.
2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving any reason, without my rights being affected. In addition, should I not wish to answer any particular question or questions, I am free to decline. My participation will not entail any risk of academic impact on my studies.
3. I understand that, under the Data Protection Act, I can at any time ask for access to the information I provide and I can also request the destruction of that information if I wish.
4. I agree to take part in the above study.

_____ Participant Name	_____ Date	_____ Signature
_____ Name of Person taking consent	_____ Date	_____ Signature
_____ Researcher	_____ Date	_____ Signature

Principal Investigator:

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Version 3
November 2014
YM

Appendix 6: Data analysis tables

THEME 1: STUDENT IDENTITIES				HWR students		ESCE students	
Categories	Nodes	Sources	References	Sources	References	Sources	References
the individual and the group	competition among the group	7	14	4	7	3	7
	team spirit	7	17	4	13	3	4
	importance of being part of French German community	10	21	5	11	5	10
level of motivation	impact of selection on motivation	4	6	3	5	1	1
	enhanced student motivation	7	12	3	6	4	6
types of students	diversity of student profiles	1	1	0	0	1	1
	typology of applicants	1	1	0	0	1	1
values	Effort and work as central values	12	25	5	11	7	14
	values and personality	12	47	6	23	6	24
	values & openmindedness	1	1	1	1	0	0
	learning orientation	6	17	3	8	3	9
	personal territories	2	2	1	1	1	1
	reflexivity and strategic thinking	2	2	0	0	2	2
citizenship	European ideal	7	9	3	4	4	5
	identity and nationality	11	15	5	6	6	9
mobility as a value	need for mobility	3	3	1	1	2	2
	mobility period before entering higher education	2	2	1	1	1	1
	early school exchange programme	11	16	5	9	6	7
			211		107		104

THEME 2: INFLUENCES & SUBJECTIVE NORMS				HWR students		ESCE students	
Categories	Nodes	Sources	References	Sources	References	Sources	References
influential others	influence of friends	8	15	3	5	5	10
	influence of parents in programme choice	14	46	6	16	8	30
	family ties with France and Germany	7	13	2	5	5	8
	early school exchange programme	11	16	5	9	6	7
	influence of school administration	7	13	1	1	6	12
	influence of school students	7	16	2	5	5	11
	positive role of FG University	7	15	4	12	3	3
	role of language teachers	11	27	6	14	5	13
	sources of information	5	7	3	5	2	2
	individual decision	8	12	4	6	4	6
image of institutions, FGP & FG students	school rankings and reputation	7	15	3	6	4	9
	image of FG students	6	10	2	2	4	8
	positive image of FGP	9	21	5	8	4	13
image of Germany, Germans, German language and Berlin	Image of Berlin as non conventional city	12	25	4	5	8	20
	image of German language	8	25	1	1	7	24
	Image of Germans	2	2	0	0	2	2
	quality of life in Germany	1	2	0	0	1	2
	contrasted image of Germany	6	35	0	0	6	35
image of France, French, French language and Paris	image of France	1	1	1	1	0	0
	image of French language	4	11	4	11	0	0
	image of French people	3	4	0	0	3	4
	image of Paris	7	19	5	10	2	9
			350		122		228

THEME 3: CONCERNS & CONTROL BELIEFS				HWR students		ESCE students	
Categories	Nodes	Sources	References	Sources	References	Sources	References
Selection process	aspects of selection procedure	12	53	5	21	7	32
	impact of selection process on student profiles	1	1	0	0	1	1
	selection process vs. simple application	1	1	1	1	0	0
	early choice for FGP compared to other ESCE students	1	1	0	0	1	1
	lack of visibility for ESCE selection upon admission	1	1	0	0	1	1
	emotional tie with FGP	8	14	4	9	4	5
	Pride of being selected	9	14	5	7	4	7
	self promotion of the program	10	13	4	7	6	6
concern for expatriation period	support from friends	9	12	4	6	5	6
	concern for expatriation period	14	25	6	12	8	13
	challenges of being on FGP	6	11	4	9	2	2
	concern for maintaining family and friend ties	3	4	1	1	2	3
concern for language level	concern for French language level	6	10	5	9	1	1
	concern for German language	5	10	0	0	5	10
	Concern for German language level	1	2	0	0	1	2
academic concerns	concern for courses in partner country	6	7	1	1	5	6
	concern for work experience in partner country	4	7	1	1	3	6
	lack of information	9	20	5	10	4	10
	administrative support from both institutions	8	20	6	16	2	4
	concern for coordination of courses between 2 institutions	5	6	4	5	1	1
economic concerns	financial barrier	11	24	4	10	7	14
	inequality in fees	3	4	2	3	1	1
	cost of living in France	6	11	4	9	2	2
	use of scholarships	8	11	5	7	3	4
	student job in Paris	2	2	2	2	0	0
	cost of living in Germany	2	2	0	0	2	2
barriers	barriers	8	15	4	8	4	7
control beliefs	confidence in ability to succeed	13	20	6	8	7	12
	confidence in capacity to adapt	2	3	1	1	1	2
			324		163		161

THEME 4: BEHAVIOURAL BELIEFS				HWR students		ESCE students	
Categories	Nodes	Sources	References	Sources	References	Sources	References
benefits of cultural diversity	benefits of cultural diversity	1	1	1	1	0	0
	discovery of another culture valued positively	11	23	4	8	7	15
	languages and cross cultural communication	1	1	1	1	0	0
	double culture enhances adaptability	3	3	0	0	3	3
benefits of French German connection	lack of German and French speaking graduates	1	1	0	0	1	1
	Paris Berlin seen as an important link	6	10	2	3	4	7
	benefits of studying abroad	2	3	1	2	1	1
benefits of studying and working abroad	study abroad makes more autonomous	5	7	2	3	3	4
	importance of 6 month work placement	8	15	3	6	5	9
	long term immersion & biculturalism	10	32	2	2	8	30
	positive impact of immersion on personality	4	8	1	2	3	6
	city influences life experience	2	2	1	1	1	1
beliefs on double degrees	double degree and employability	11	27	5	14	6	13
	double degree beliefs	13	30	5	14	8	16
beliefs on international scope of FGP	English language as a central requirement for international career	10	23	6	13	4	10
	Programme prepares for international careers, not limited to France and Germany	9	23	4	13	5	10
	FGP enhances employability	10	20	3	7	7	13
beliefs on career prospects	enhanced career prospects	6	9	2	3	4	6
			238		93		145

THEME 5: MOTIVATIONS				HWR students		ESCE students	
Categories	Nodes	Sources	References	Sources	References	Sources	References
life experience in two countries and languages	2 or 3 languages ability	3	6	1	1	2	5
	fear of losing German language	1	2	0	0	1	2
	cross cultural ability thanks to FGP	10	21	4	11	6	10
	discover other half of binational status	1	1	1	1	0	0
	make the most of binational status	1	3	1	3	0	0
	programme fulfils desire to experience life in partner country and perfect mastery of language	8	16	3	7	5	9
	programme more interesting for students without a double culture	8	20	2	4	6	16
	FGP as an integrated and personal experience	5	7	3	3	2	4
aspects related to the choice process of FGP	choice of FGP coherent with personality	6	8	1	2	5	6
	FGP seen as a coherent choice with prior experience	12	32	5	11	7	21
	natural choice of FGP	7	16	3	6	4	10
	choice of FGP or choice of school	10	20	3	4	7	16
	FGP not as first choice	1	2	1	2	0	0
	choice of Master programs	2	2	1	1	1	1
	FGP is a long term commitment	9	11	4	5	5	6
	programme seen as less flexible than other regular programmes	7	23	4	13	3	10
	programme seen as more demanding than other programmes	11	21	5	12	6	9
international career prospects	FGP compared with other FGP	1	1	0	0	1	1
	FGP compared to other international programs	5	8	1	1	4	7
	FGP for international management	1	3	1	3	0	0
	German job market	2	5	0	0	2	5
	professional career goal	13	34	5	9	8	25
	French German relationship	9	10	3	3	6	7
	rational approach to orientation	1	3	0	0	1	3
	personal competitive advantage	4	9	1	1	3	8
	utilitarian approach of German students	2	2	0	0	2	2
recognition advantage	FGP offers a global perspective with a generalist content	3	3	2	2	1	1
	Double degree vs. Erasmus	1	1	1	1	0	0
	FGP vs. Erasmus	12	27	5	9	7	18
	two official credentials are better than one	8	14	2	3	6	11
	recognition of foreign degree in partner country	4	13	1	4	3	9
advantage of two academic systems	FGP officialises bilingualism and deep experience of two countries	1	1	0	0	1	1
	French education system and security	3	7	1	1	2	6
	German education system and freedom	3	8	1	1	2	7
importance of programme content	differences in academic approaches	11	38	5	15	6	23
	importance of program content international business	7	13	6	12	1	1
	mix of business and languages	2	2	1	1	1	1
socialisation within mixed group	mixed group of French and German	5	11	1	2	4	9
	small, balanced group & cohesion	12	51	6	29	6	22
	social benefit of making new friends being part of group	6	8	1	1	5	7
direct 5 year master	secure master degree in 5 years	4	7	3	5	1	2
	advantage of direct 5 year master	6	9	4	7	2	2
	post hoc rationalisation	5	6	3	4	2	2
			505		200		305